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Photos from outdoor adventurers enjoying their Helinox gear (left to right, top to bottom):

- Stuart Cameron tackling the Overland Track, Tasmania with Helinox TL Series Walking Poles.
- Philippa and friend enjoying Bachsten Falls in the Kimberley.
- Marcus & Heidi cycled around Australia with Chair One.
- Di enjoying the shade of her Helinox Umbrella, Jatbula Trail, NT.
- 'Mates 4 Mates' Sea Kayak expedition camping with Chair One, Hogan Island, Bass Strait.
- Richard & his wife trekking in Nepal using Helinox TL Series Poles.
- Leonie on a pack horse expedition with her Helinox gear, Guy Fawkes River, NSW.



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Resting the feet
and quenching
the thirst on NZ's
Queen Charlotte
Track. Cheers!

Like every kid growing up in NZ I loved playing rugby. I loved the physicality of it and I worshipped the All Blacks (still do – sorry readers!) unfortunately (or fortunately according to my mum) at 16 I was told by doctors to stop playing after breaking my collarbone a couple of times. That came at a time when my parents separated and suddenly life became a very confusing and lonely place.

Then one day a mate of mine told me about venturer scouts – that's scouts for teens aged 15-19. At first I was quite shy meeting all these new people. But I quickly came out of my shell thanks to the man who ran the scout group, Alan Walker who took me under his wing and showed me that with friends and plenty of positive reinforcement the world wasn't nearly so scary.

Almost all of the activities we did in venturer scouts involved the outdoors with bushwalking playing a major part. At first we just started with day walks but as the group grew more confident and knowledgeable about bush safety, navigation and outdoor equipment we moved to overnights then multi-day bushwalks through some incredible wilderness.

It's with this spirit of natural progression that

this year's Great Walks Annual comes to you. The issue is broken into three sections – day walks, overnights and multi-dayers and within each section you'll find travel stories, gear reviews, how-to articles and other features. Highlights include the challenging day walk in SE Qld's Lamington NP to discover the story behind the lost Stinson and Australia's most famous bush rescue (pg28).

We also look at walks to the best swimming holes in the Blue Mountains (pg20), the Oxfam Trailwalker – the world's toughest overnight bushwalk (pg54), and we showcase Britain's best long-distance walking paths (pg78).

We also join Brian Freeman from the Walking Wounded charity as he traverses Australia from north to south in an effort to raise funds for programs supporting Australia's modern-day veterans (pg70). A compelling read.

There are also Top Gear stories for each section and plenty of inspiring photos so we hope you enjoy the Great Walks Annual and as usual if you have any feedback, story ideas or pictures you want to share email us: editor@greatwalks.com.au

Happy walking
Brent McKean

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



James Stuart

James blogs about hiking and outdoor parenting at thelifeoutdoors.com.au.



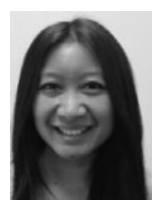
Chris Whitelaw

Hervey Bay-based Chris is a freelance journalist and a regular contributor to several travel and motoring titles.



Jim Baker

Perth-based Jim is a recycled Pom who enjoys trekking in Australia, Europe and Asia.



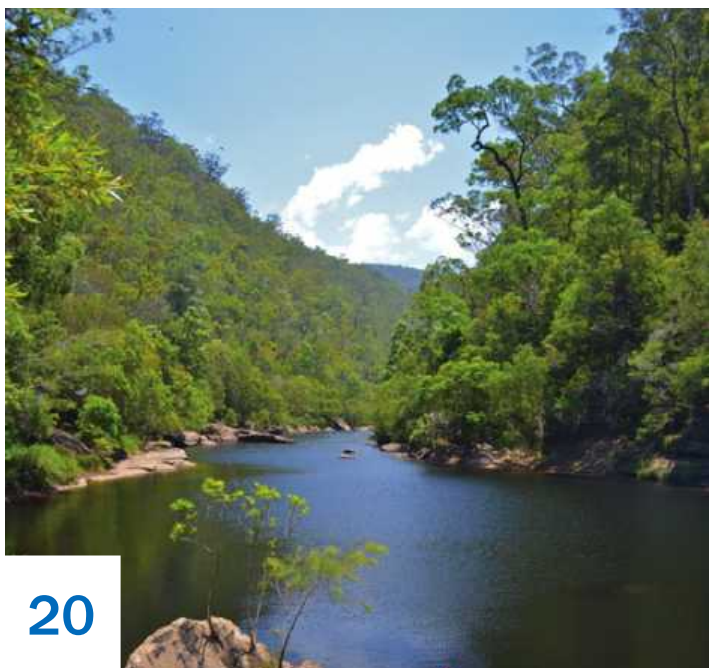
Andrea Purnomo

When she's not writing, you can spot Andrea challenging herself on a trail, overseas trek or partaking an adventure sport.

GREAT WALKS

“ We were surrounded by spectacular panoramic views as we traversed the granite saddle to Little Horn (1355m) and followed the Face Track beneath the dolerite ramparts of The Cradle. ”

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SCENIC RIM TRAIL
BY SPICERS

Pool of Memories, Tasmania

The Du Cane Range, in the southern end of Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair NP, has some of the most stunning alpine environments in Australia. One example is the tarn known as the Pool of Memories, with Mount Geryon (1509m) standing over it. With its mirror-like surface and surround of ghostly trees this alpine lake is postcard perfect.

Some peaks on the Du Cane Range can be accessed as side-trips on the Overland Track, the most popular being the walk up to Mount Ossa (1617m), the state's highest peak, which is rated as medium-challenging. There's a bit of a rock scramble at the end to reach the top but the views are well worth it. For more info visit www.parks.tas.gov.au 





A bushwalk down memory lane

Marshall Kelly goes in search of an illusive childhood haunt

It all started on Saturday, about a half century ago, when my brother Scott and I, together with four other boys, were taken by the father of two of the boys (Mr Jay) on a hike in the Morton National Park in southern NSW. Way back then we only knew it as the gullies at the back of the Wingello State Forest.

We were all aged around 11 and squeezed into Mr Jay's car as we headed to a destination unknown to us, somewhere past the pine forest. On arrival, we hiked down through a gap in the cliffs to what we now know was Johnson's Creek way down below. We spent a night there on the bank and returned on the Sunday evening, ready for school the next morning.

The mission was accomplished by following the creek that then joined Bundanoon Creek. What a time we had: swimming, laughing and larking about and exploring rocky overhangs with a few grazed knuckles into the bargain. As night drew in, Mr



Jay managed to catch an eel, which he cut up and we all took a portion home as a souvenir and "gift" to our mums. That whole weekend was magic and a memory that has stayed with my brother and I to this day.

Scott and I, reminiscing one day, decided to revisit that spot and spend a night there. The only complication was our rusty memories. After all, it was about 50 years before. Exactly which creek was it? How did we get there? Could we find it again?

Sadly, Mr Jay was now long gone, together with one of the other boys who had died aged 45. Mr Jay's sons just weren't interested and we had lost contact with the others completely.

I invested in a topographical map of Wingello and searched for the likely location. I then set off with Scott and my two sons, Luke and Shannon, to revisit our childhood memory. However, Mother Nature had had her way and we couldn't make our way through the dense undergrowth, despite the creek calling up to explore. Fortunately we were able to find a flat area to camp for the night and went to sleep with the creek quietly taunting us.

Undaunted, the following year the group had grown to seven and we tried again but the terrain was too steep; what I had read as a gap proved to be a waterfall and was impassable.

With our fourth and final attempt (now with eight of us), I finally identified the correct location. As we worked our way down, Scott and I recognised it as the correct place – persistence had paid off.

That night, as we camped by Johnson's Creek, I proposed a toast with green ginger wine (we know how to enjoy ourselves) and thanked all those intrepid souls who had helped us return after all of those years. Perhaps, more to the point, my brother and I had survived and were able to successfully complete what is a demanding walk.

That night we caught an eel, but released it rather than chop it up – maybe that one caught all those years ago hadn't tasted so great.

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A gorgeous day walk in
Fitzgerald River National
Park. Tourism WA.



GREAT DAY WALKS

TWO OF TASSIE'S BEST

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS WHITELAW

Looking from Glacier Rock
towards Cradle Mountain.

Relishing the ridges

Great Walks explores two of Tasmania's
best day walks – the Dove Lake High
Circuit and the Tarn Shelf Circuit.



Chains on the climb to Hanson's Peak.
BELOW: A stunted pine in the moorland.

Dove Lake High Circuit

Cradle Mountain is the starting point of the iconic Overland Track, a 65km multi-day trek to Lake St Clair at the southern end of Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair NP. The majority of visitors, however, come to Dove Lake on a day pass, looking to step out on one (or more) of the many excellent walks in the area. The most popular is the Dove Lake Loop Track, a 6km circuit (Grade 2) that takes about two hours. For those with a bit more time and looking for a more challenging excursion, I recommend the Dove Lake High Circuit.

We did this walk on Australia Day and there were lots of holidaymakers about enjoying one of the few clear days to bless the park each year. We were layered to the eyeballs to ward off the early morning chill but, as the sun climbed above the ridges and burned off the shadows, we peeled down to our shirts and donned the sunnies.

The Grade 4 hike began at the lakeside carpark and followed the Dove Lake Loop along the eastern shore through rainforest and past quartzite beaches to Glacier Rock. After pausing here for a few snaps, we picked up the rough Lake Rodway Track that climbed steeply towards Hanson's Peak (1185m), so steeply in places that we had to use chains to haul ourselves up. We were surrounded by spectacular panoramic views as we traversed the granite saddle to Little Horn (1355m) and followed the Face Track beneath the dolerite ramparts of The Cradle. The trail soon descended steeply past Lake Wilks tarn to the Dove Lake shore and re-joined the Loop track via the Ballroom Forest and the boat shed back to the carpark.

According to my "Fitbit" that was about 10km, 15,000 steps and 161 floors – and a fantastic way to see one of the best-known natural wonders in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. But be warned: this rugged, sub-alpine terrain is exposed to extreme and rapidly changing elements, which can deliver rain (2000mm annually), snow and driving winds at any time of year, and sometimes on the same day. All walkers on any track in the area should be prepared and clothed to suit changeable weather



NEED TO KNOW

Cradle Mountain lies at the northern end of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair NP. It is 1.5 hours from Devonport via the B19 and B14 south to Sheffield, then C136 and C132 to the park entrance. For more info and a downloadable map visit www.parks.tas.gov.au/natparks/cradle or call (03) 6492 1110. An excellent Cradle Mountain Day Walk Map (1:25 000) is available at the Visitors Centre.



and track conditions. Summer and autumn are the best months to visit as the weather is generally warmer and more reliable, and many of the park's native plants are flowering.

Tarn Shelf Circuit, Mount Field NP

Mt Field NP is one of Tasmania's oldest and most loved national parks, embracing ecosystems ranging from forests of towering swamp gum (some of the tallest in the world) and massive tree ferns, through rainforest dominated by myrtle and sassafras



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The boardwalk descending through old pine forest near Twilight Tarn.

among the upper slopes, to an alpine mosaic of snow gums, heath moors and glacial lakes across the highland plateau. This latter region, around Lake Dobson, offers fantastic bushwalking in summer, downhill skiing in winter (July-September) and dramatic mountain scenery all year round.

The upland walks range in difficulty from the easy Pandani Grove Nature Trail (ranked by Tas Parks as one of the 60 Great Short Walks in Tasmania), through the medium Snow Gum Track, to the challenging Tarn Shelf Circuit, via Lake Newdegate, Twilight Tarn and Lake Webster. We spent a very long day combining all three trails in a trek-fest that rates among the best alpine experiences anywhere in Australia.

From the carpark the trail skirted Lake Dobson through groves of tall pandani and pencil pine before branching onto the Urquhart Track and a steep 4WD access road (authorised vehicles only) to the ski fields. Just beyond the ski lodges, a rocky track meandered through a forest of gnarled snow gums on the way to the plateau, with excellent views of Lake Seal and the Broad River Valley, weather permitting. As the track levels out within sight of the Rodway Range, it branches off to Mt Field West to the left and the Tarn Shelf to the right.

Even in dry conditions the Tarn track is wet underfoot and often frozen in winter. Extensive sections of boardwalk and natural paving have been laid across the muddier sections of the track to protect the rare and sensitive vegetation in the area. Gradually, the trail descended across the shelf, past Lake Newdegate and some smaller tarns, through a forest of bleached pencil pine skeletons (the eerie relic of past bushfires) to Twilight Tarn. From here, the trail dropped steeply to Lake Webster and a longish last leg through moors of button grass and gum forests to the carpark – where my Fitbit showed 25,226 steps, 208 floors and 17km of pure Tassie magic for the day.



NEED TO KNOW

Mt Field NP is about one hour's drive from Hobart via the Brooker Highway (A10) northwest to New Norfolk and either the A10 or B62 along the River Derwent to Westerway and the winding B61 to the small township of National Park and the entrance to Mt Field NP. The Lake Dobson section, with the Tarn Shelf Walk, is accessed by a further 16km of winding gravel road that may be closed due to snow conditions. For more information and a downloadable map visit www.parks.tas.gov.au › Parks & Reserves › National Parks › Mt Field National Park or call 03 6288 1170.

Walk notes

DOVE LAKE HIGH CIRCUIT

Time/distance/grade: 4hr/10km/medium.



Walk notes

TARN SHELF CIRCUIT

Time/distance/grade: 1 day/17km/moderate.





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WORDS AND PHOTOS _ SALLY TERTINI AND STEVE POLLARD

Colo River at Canoe Creek.

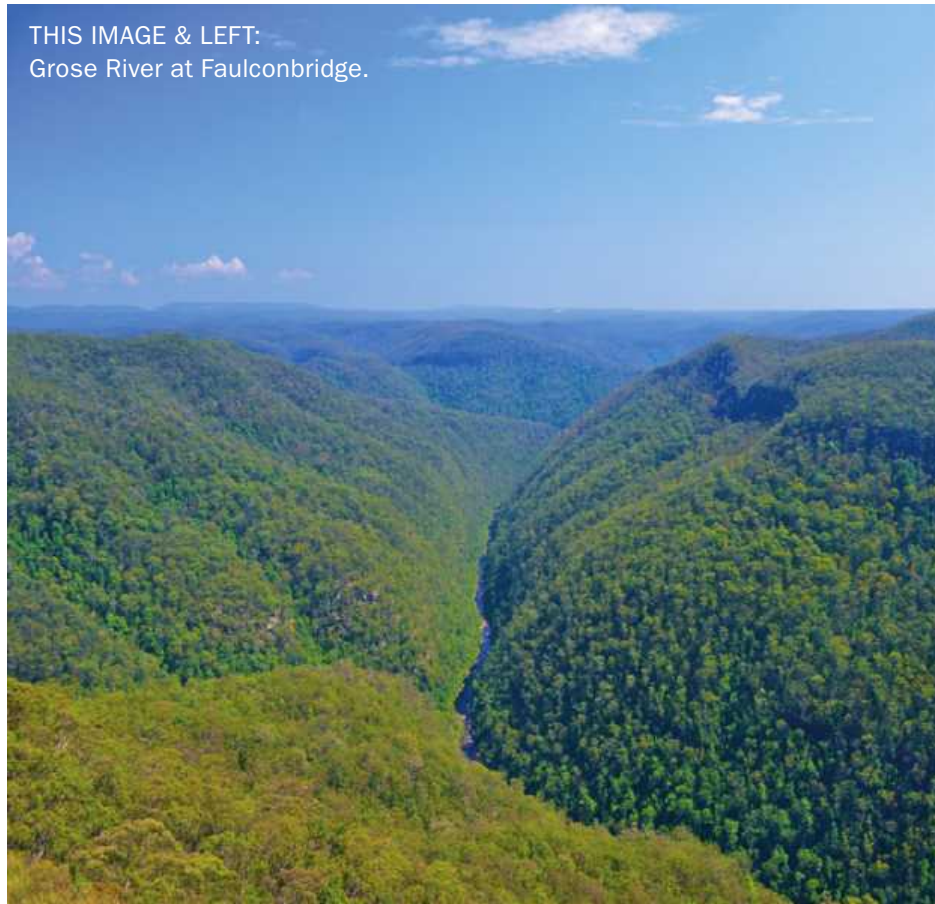
Keep it cool

If you enjoy a cooling swim during a bushwalk then check out these amazing waterholes in the Greater Blue Mountains.



“ This sleepy bend in the Colo is bounded by wide sandbanks, bleached white by the sun. ”

THIS IMAGE & LEFT:
Grose River at Faulconbridge.



The Greater Blue Mountains is a region for the truly adventurous – for those that are compelled to explore around the next bend in the river, and the next. Sally Tertini and Steve Pollard, the authors of *Wild Swimming Sydney Australia*, reveal their favourite wild swimming locations.

NSW has only five wild rivers – a title reserved for the most pristine and untouched – and two of them course through the bush here, passing through eye-popping canyons and rugged valleys. While the region offers some easy bush experiences, many locations are isolated and remote, and the rewards for the intrepid swimmer are great!

Colo River at Canoe Creek

This is somewhere you'll never forget. Neither is it a place you can just happen upon, and this remoteness adds to its special feeling. Here, the Colo manoeuvres around a dogleg bend beneath grand sandstone cliffs, and it makes for a breathtaking setting for a swim. It's a truly memorable spot!

Such is the beauty of the Colo that it breeds a particular type of fanatic. Many make annual pilgrimages here, and are ever keen to turn others on to this pristine wilderness. The craggy cliffs are so tall you need to arch your head all the way back to catch a glimpse of the sky. The golden river can be shallow during times of low rainfall, although there remain pockets deep enough for short swims. It's such a great spot that you should allow time to explore up and downriver, so make use of one of the large sandbanks and camp.

Facilities: Campsite

Seclusion: Average-secluded

Navigation: Hard, Colo Heights GR743140

Descent: 400m

Walk-in: 135min/3.5km, hard

The walk down is not especially long, but it's one of the hardest in the book, involving a couple of tricky rock scrambles. Most people stay at least overnight, and it's difficult to imagine having a morning swim in a more dramatic and idyllic spot!

From the service station on Putty Rd, Colo Heights, continue N for approximately 16km, then turn sharp L onto fire trail, marked with a Wollemi National Park sign. Continue for 8km to car park at locked gate. Proceed past gate along Grassy Hill Fire Trail for approximately 2km. About 10m before a turning circle, take unmarked track on L. It initially descends gently, but becomes progressively steeper. There are some difficult scrambles as the path drops into the gully of Canoe Ck, before arriving at a large sandbank beside the river.

Colo River at Bob Turner's Track

The scenery here may not be as dramatic as at nearby Canoe Creek, but Bob Turner's Track is by far the easiest way down into the rugged Colo Wilderness. What's more, the river here is always deep and excellent for swimming, even in times of drought.

This sleepy bend in the Colo is bounded by wide sandbanks, bleached white by the sun, with pockets of shady casuarinas.

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While you can easily spend a day happily swimming right here, there's also the option of exploring smaller pools up and downriver. The sandbanks are an ideal place to pitch your tent, and there's plenty of room for multiple camping parties.

Facilities: Campsite

Seclusion: Average-secluded

Navigation: Easy

Descent: 260m

Walk-in: 90min, 3.5km, moderate

From the service station at Colo Heights, continue N for 700m, then turn L, signed Bob Turners Fire Trail. Continue for another 2.7km to car park (not at the trail head). Take the steps signed Bob Turners Walking Track. This well-made track descends moderately, crossing several small gullies, and leads directly to the river.

Colo River at Tootie Creek

The wilderness has a particular luring call that's inextricably linked with solitude. You will most likely have this piece of wilderness to yourself. The track that leads down to the river is not particularly well known, and the walk is a hard slog, helping make this the least visited of the Colo River swims featured in this book. Set below rapids, it's a fantastically quiet spot, with sandy shallows and a 100m-long, deep pool. On the opposite bank, craggy cliffs almost conquer the sky, while a large sandbank edges the pool and makes a terrific spot to camp overnight

Facilities: Campsite

Seclusion: Secluded

Navigation: Hard, Mountain Lagoon GR 825028

Descent: 440m

Walk-in: 120min/2.55km, hard

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Walking Experiences





Colo River at Bob Turners Track
RIGHT: Colo River at Tootie Creek.



“If you’re feeling fit, and want to get away from it all, this is a great place to head.”

From Mountain Lagoon Rd, Mountain Lagoon, turn L onto Sams Way. After 1.3km turn L onto fire trail (signed Walking Tracks, Tootie Creek, Colo Merroo) and follow the signs for Tootie Ck for a little over 5km to end. The track from the car park descends gently along a spur – it’s often indistinct, but there are no turn-offs and there are occasional star picket markers. After 1.8km you arrive at a spectacular lookout on the edge of the Colo Gorge. Your destination is the rapids far below. The track from here switchbacks L past an impressive bridging boulder. There’s a lot of flood debris just before you reach the sandbank and river, which you must pick through. It’s a good idea to leave an exit marker for yourself before you go off

to explore. On your return trip, note that at the rock outcrop above the lookout, keep along the spur line, ignoring a fake trail L.

Grose River at Waterboard Fire Trail

The scenery here is ridiculously pretty – enormous, mast-like blue gums line the river, and their ghostly grey trunks form a striking contrast with the vivid bush beyond. Despite being the Grose’s most easily accessible point, this tranquil spot is little visited and makes a superb place to spend the day.

The Grose here is exceedingly languid. It seems to have decided that after all that rushing down through the mountains, it will savour the wonderful valley scenery for just a while longer before having to sully itself with the murky Hawkesbury just a few kilometres downstream. The mere gentlest of breezes appear to make it change direction and head back up towards the mountains.

The walk follows a fire trail that was established to enable testing of the Lower Grose Valley for its suitability to dam. Thankfully, the

Ben Alsop admiring the Everest View from Gokyo Ri, Nepal



Ben Alsop admiring the Everest View from Gokyo Ri, Nepal



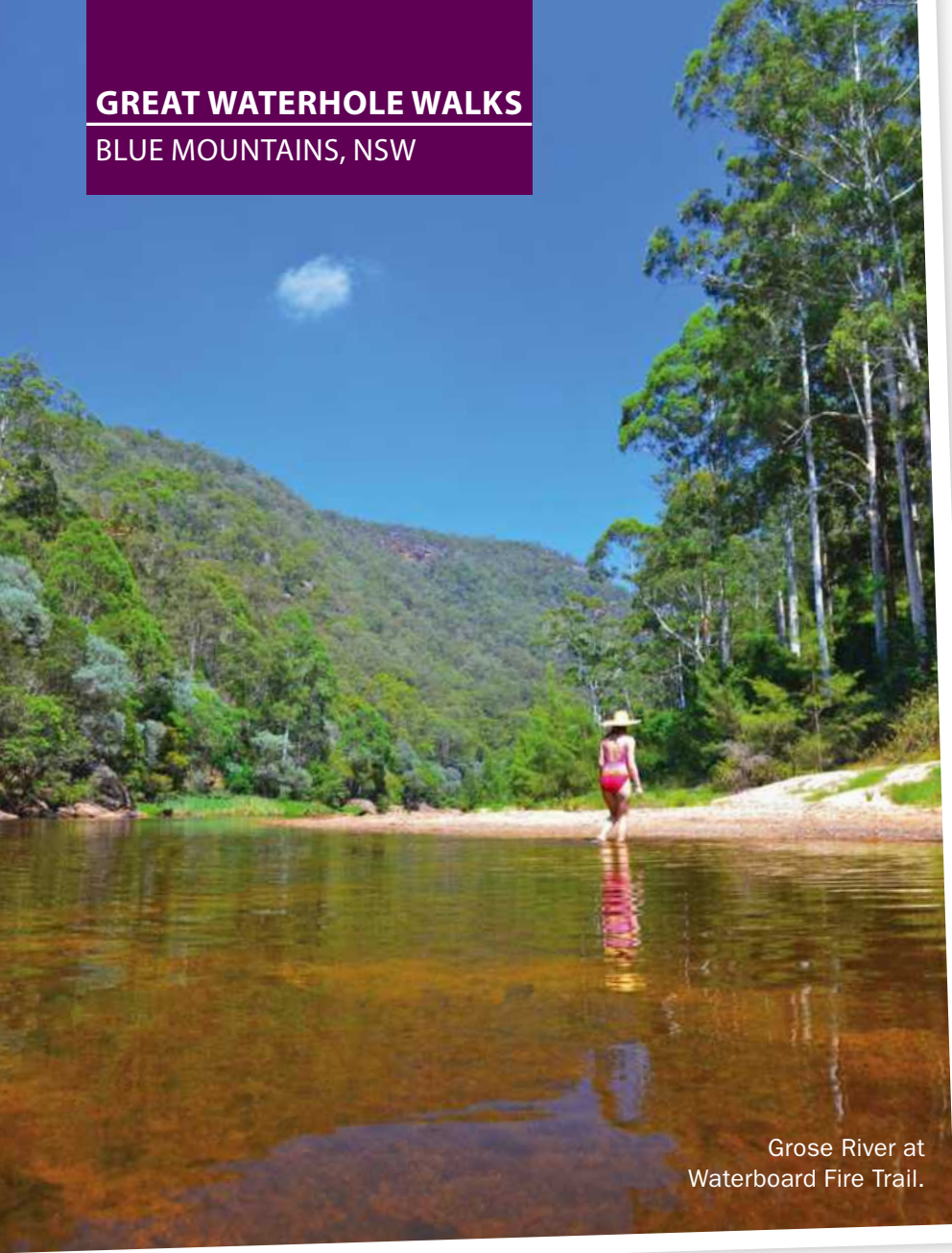




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GREAT WATERHOLE WALKS
BLUE MOUNTAINS, NSW



Grose River at Waterboard Fire Trail.

i NEED TO KNOW

Wild Swimming Sydney Australia
by Sally Tertini and Steve Pollard
(AUS\$32.99, Wild Things Publishing)
is available from all good bookshops.



dam never went ahead and the Grose remains intact. The rich gold water is rather shallow, although there are some deeper navigable channels for swimming. It's such a beautiful spot, though, that it's actually quite wonderful just kicking back in the shallows and soaking in the ambiance!

Seclusion: Secluded

Navigation: Moderate-hard, Kurrajong GR 813775

Descent: 150m

Walk-in: 50 mins/2km, moderate

From the end of Cabbage Tree Rd, Grose Wold, continue onto the fire trail and take the second L after 750m, which after 50m arrives at a car park. Walk through gate onto the Water Board Fire Trail. Follow this gently down, then gently up, ignoring numerous turn-offs, until you reach a major fork with a single tree in the middle. Take L fork. This soon starts to descend steeply for 1km. It's very rough, but flattens out parallel to the river. 50m after a concrete paved section, look out for a steep path descending to the

Blue Mountains Heritage Centre and National Parks Shop

Govetts Leap waterfall, B/W: P. Cardow: OEH 2010



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TALK TO THE LOCALS WHO KNOW IT BEST

For the best local insights into the Blue Mountains, call in at the Blue Mountains Heritage Centre just near Govetts Leap waterfall in Blackheath. Our friendly staff can provide you with up-to-date information on bushwalking, camping and sight-seeing in this region and in your favourite NSW national parks. Maps, books and Australian-made souvenirs available. Our shop, theatre and gallery are open every day except Christmas Day from 9.00am to 4.30pm.

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L. This quickly brings you to a wide sandy bank after 50m. Make sure to take your bearing if you leave this spot.

Grose River at Faulconbridge Point

Often, even when you think you're a long way from civilisation, you can still hear the occasional squeal of semi-trailer air brakes, or the roar of a motorbike; but here, nope. It's just cicadas, bell birds and the gush of the Grose.

If you're feeling fit, and want to get away from it all, this is a great place to head. Situated deep within the little-visited Lower Grose Valley, getting here involves one of the longest walks in the book. However, with a bicycle you could easily knock off the first 5.5km. This section of the walk is very exposed, with minimal shade, so aim to spend the hottest part of the day at the pool.

The track leads you directly to a large pool on a bend in the Grose. The pool's shimmering surface is dark and opaque next to the brilliant green of the encroaching bush. Spend a day wading in and out of the water, diving off rocks and floating on your back breathing in the summer. It's a wonderfully scenic spot and a real sight for sore eyes.

Seclusion: Average-secluded

Navigation: Moderate

Descent: 400m



Colo River at Tootie Creek.

Walk-in: 165min/6.75km/moderate

Travel along Grose Rd, Faulconbridge for 3.5km from junction with Great Western Hwy to car park before locked gate.

Continue on foot past the gate for approximately 5.5km. Just before a turning island on the L side of the fire trail, a track branches off to the R – it's faintly marked "Grose" in white on a rock (if you're feeling enthusiastic you can continue a further 1km to the impressive lookout). Take this track and continue until you reach the pool – approximately 1.25km. This part of the track descends steeply and is rocky in parts with some scrambling required. Thankfully, the track levels to a more gradual descent for a few hundred metres before the final 150m scramble.



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GREAT DAY WALKS

STINSON WRECK, LAMINGTON NP, QLD

WORDS_KEW WALKER. PHOTOS KW, O'REILLY'S
RAINFOREST RETREAT AND TOURISM QLD.

The search for the lost Stinson

On a challenging day walk *Great Walks* retraces the steps of one of Australia's most famous bush rescues.



On the Stinson Walk



Challenging terrain.
BELOW: The crash makes headlines.

In February 1937, a Stinson airliner left Brisbane on route for Sydney via Lismore with seven people on board. It never arrived in Lismore and despite an intensive search no trace of the plane was found. Nine days after the crash, Beaudesert grazier Bernard O'Reilly set out on foot to find the Stinson wreckage. His story is now legend, and the trail to the plane wreck is the theme of one extraordinary walk.

Joining a guided walk to the wreck with O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, we entered Lamington NP along an inhospitable area thick with vegetation. The track through Christmas Creek mirrors the way O'Reilly traversed to find help from the locals after he discovered the plane.

The creek was strewn with good sized boulders perfect for making a sometimes less-than-agile crossing. We travelled creek-side for a short distance before joining a path winding through the trees. Occasionally we were back to boulder hopping, as we encountered tributaries that feed the creek.

The search begins

Before O'Reilly set off on the search he had spoken to locals who lived under the plane's flight path, scanned maps and made a plan. According to his calculations the plane must have disappeared in the McPherson Range between Kerry and Lismore – not off the coast of Newcastle as thought.

With faith in his own convictions O'Reilly set off in search of survivors with a loaf of bread, a pound of butter, onions for roasting and some billy tea. He went alone because he was proficient in the bush and didn't want to be slowed by others.

"I told my wife before I left that I intended looking for discolouration caused by fire. I thought that if the plane had crashed with the power on it would have burnt," O'Reilly told an enquiry into the crash in March 1937. "I decided before I left that that was the only guide I could possibly have."

He pushed his way through dense rainforest and spent the night huddled under a tree. On the second day he spotted a



discolouration on Mount Throakban about 13km away and headed to it. The thick vegetation continued to be a challenge.

Three hours later O'Reilly heard someone yelling "Coo-ee". Following the sound he discovered two men laying near the burnt out remains of the Stinson – John Proud and Joe Binstead. Both were in pitiful shape and one had a broken leg.

The men told O'Reilly they had survived on water that Binstead collected from a creek. However, Binstead was so weak and the effort of collecting water and berries so taxing that he would have to collapse overnight at the spring before finding the energy to trek back up to the crash site.

O'Reilly made them tea and gave them some clothes. As he left to get help he reassured the men he would return. "I will have a doctor and a hundred men tomorrow morning," he told them.

A chilling find

The two survivors told O'Reilly that a third person, a young Englishman called James Westray, was also alive and he had gone to find help. O'Reilly quickly found Westray's tracks.



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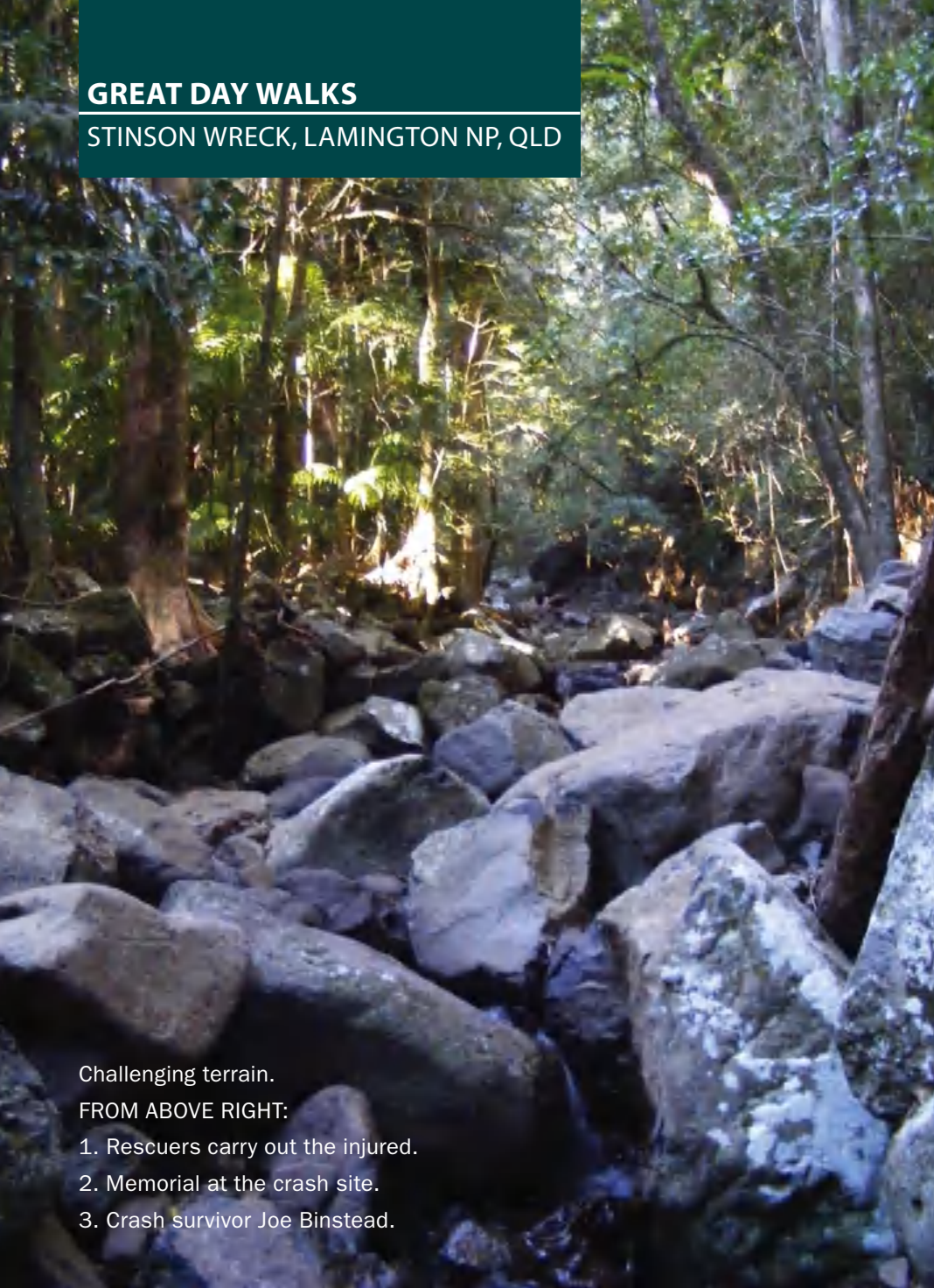
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Challenging terrain.

FROM ABOVE RIGHT:

1. Rescuers carry out the injured.
2. Memorial at the crash site.
3. Crash survivor Joe Binstead.

“It was dangerous country even for a chap who knew how to get there. That man must have used a good deal of gumption because he went the right way,” O’Reilly told the enquiry.

Unfortunately O’Reilly found Westray’s body sitting up against a rock, a burnt cigarette stub still between his fingers. Westray had fallen down a steep cliff and managed to drag himself up against the rock to await certain death from his injuries. This discovery shattered poor O’Reilly – but he had more pressing matters.

“No time now to give way to the savage of hurt which I felt,” recalled O’Reilly in his autobiography *Green Mountains*. “There were two other men dying for want of attention, and every second was priceless – the light was fading, and if I was caught in that strange gorge, in jungle night that was as black as the pit of hell, fatal delay might occur.”

Early into the walk we stopped at James Westray’s grave site located close to the tumbling waters of Christmas Creek. The sunlight danced through the canopy while the sound of bird song filtered through the morning air creating a peaceful resting place. Sadly, Westray was only 6km from the nearest house when he died.

The rescue party

After discovering Westray, O’Reilly continued on his course and at around 7.30pm he found a hut. From there he was directed to a house with a phone. O’Reilly’s first call was to a Mr Robinson of Airlines of Australia in Brisbane, telling him the plane had been found. “I think Robinson seemed slightly dazed and was rather disbelieving. Especially when I told him there were two men alive, he seemed not to know quite what to say,” recalled O’Reilly.

Immediately a plan was put into action. There would be two



rescue parties. A small group would quickly return to the injured men with medicine and supplies using the track O’Reilly had used. A second, larger party would cut a track back along the top of the Lamington Plateau towards the wreck, which was deemed an easier way to get the men out.

From the creek our group stared straight up the mountain, the one O’Reilly had come down from, and we knew the toughest part of the walk was upon us. We began to appreciate the challenges the rescue party faced trying to carrying the two injured survivors out on stretchers through the thick, rocky bush.

With O’Reilly guiding and accompanied by a doctor, the first of the two rescue parties headed towards the crash site. It was just before dawn and the heavens began to open. Three hours into the walk they found Westray’s body. Wet and tired the rescue party continued up the mountain, reaching the crash site

about 10.30am. A tent was erected and the doctor attended to the survivors. The four men who died in the crash were buried in a common grave.

The following morning the injured men were put on stretchers. O’Reilly and his men began cutting a path for the stretcher bearers and in the meantime the other party, made up of other local farmers, was cutting a trail due west of the crash site, 16km away. This route is known as Stretcher Track. It is overgrown and impassable today.

O’Reilly hadn’t slept in days and fatigue was beginning to show. “I took a hand at carrying one stretcher and carried it for about three hundred yards or less, but I found myself so weak that I thought I might be more of a danger than a help,” he said.

Hours went by as both parties cut a path towards each other battling the heat, steep terrain and thick vegetation. Eventually the groups met up and the injured were taken to hospital, ending one of Australia great bush rescue stories.

The wreckage today

We spent the next three hours scrambling forever upwards. Tree roots made convenient foot and hand holds, and vines came in handy when the ground slid away.



NEED TO KNOW

Walking tours of the Stinson wreck can be organised through O’Reilly’s Rainforest Retreat (www.oreillys.com.au). Walking notes for the trail can be found in ‘Take a walk in South-East Queensland’ by John & Lyn Dale (www.takeawalk.com.au). The walk to the wreck is a long, demanding day and a reasonable amount of fitness is required to take it on.





We continued climbing for sometime. There was a wonderful lookout across the valley to an area known as the Lost World but first there was a narrow rock ledge to negotiate. It wasn't such a long fall from the ledge to the ground but the endless tumble back down the mountain bothered me. Eventually we burst upon a magnificent view of a landscape untouched. Surrounded by wild orchids the scene was breathtaking.

Another hour of walking and scrambling, and with my hamstring aching, we finally reached the top of the mountain and into a broad clearing. Fifty metres down the other side of the mountain is the remains of the Stinson. Seventy plus years later, very little is left of the plane. Sadly, it looked more like burnt out bicycle.

However here lay the remains of the victims and viewing the actual crash site puts the story of O'Reilly's remarkable rescue

into perspective. I could imagine those poor survivors clinging to life and hope in this perilous spot for ten long and lonely days.

Paying our respects to the victims at the crash site we ventured to the lookout featuring sweeping views across northern NSW and Mt Warning. We had just enough time for lunch. Daylight was burning and we now knew this was no track to negotiate after dark. The sun had begun its western slide as we left Christmas Creek. I went home with an enormous sense of admiration for the men who staged the rescue.

And as for O'Reilly, he lost a massive 16kg during the gruelling four day search and rescue. Afterwards he returned to work on his family's property and rainforest retreat that still exists today. O'Reilly's autobiography *Green Mountains* is a must-read for anyone wanting to know more of this incredible story.



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Black Diamond Alpine Start Hoodie

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Website: www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au



Garmin Vivofit 2 watch

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RRP: \$139

Website: www.garmin.com.au

Ahnu Sugarpine boot womens

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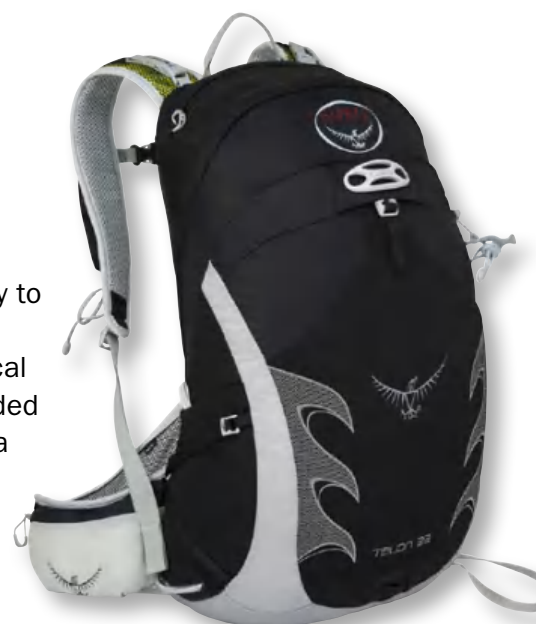


Osprey Talon 22 daypack

America's most popular rucksack brand has plenty to offer Aussie bushwalkers. This panel loading technical daypack has a mesh-padded airscape back panel and a biostretch harness to keep you ventilated and comfortable while you walk. It also has trekking pole attachments to stow while on the go.

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Website: www.outdooragencies.com.au



Deuter Futura Pro 42 daypack

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Lowe Alpine Airzone ND24 daypack womens

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Hipsta bottle holder

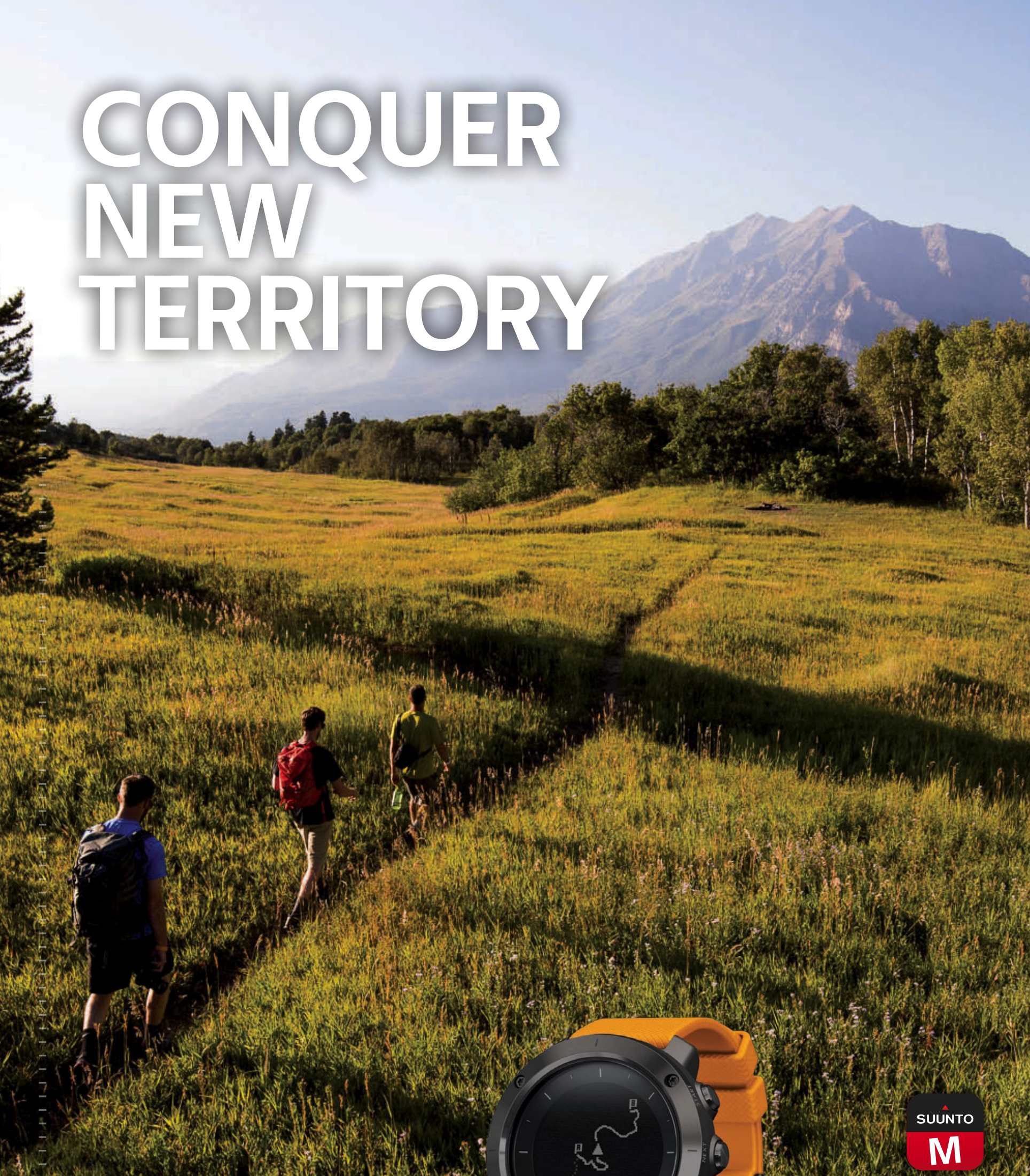
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WINNING PHOTO

Rodney wins a Deuter and Leki prize pack worth over \$150!



Kosciuszko National Park, NSW

Rodney Baurycza, Bangor NSW

Camera: Sony RX100 M2

Rodney: "My son and I went for a two-day backcountry ski in the NSW Main Range in Kosciuszko National Park. I took this photo right on sunrise at Seaman's Hut. The plan was to head to the western faces, but unfortunately the weather got the better of us on this trip. Might have to wait till next year now."

Snakes, Myall Lakes NP NSW

Neil Randall, Sunshine, NSW

Camera: Camera Panasonic DMC ZS3

Neil: "We had arrived early for our kayak paddle in Myall Lakes NP NSW, so after setting up our campsite at Korsman's Landing, we decided to scout around the area whilst waiting for the rest of our group. Walking down a bit of a track we came across these two snakes.... It was spring after all – the first of October on a brilliant day."





Thorsborne Trail, Hinchinbrook Island, Qld

Louise Noble, Withcott, QLD

Camera: Panasonic Lumix

Louise: "This is 11-year-old Dale, who recently completed the Thorsborne Trail, carrying all her own gear, setting up camp and cooking her own meals, she was a real champ! Photo taken before we descended into the swamp and lost count of the creek crossings. But no swimming, although we didn't see any crocodiles, they are about!"



Pennines, UK

Colin Ryman, Tweed Heads, NSW

Camera: Nikon Coolpix P610

Colin: "Locals advise that you do not tackle the climb and subsequent bogs of Nine Standards Rigg on The Pennines unless you can clearly see them on approach. About 10 minutes before this photo they stood clear as a bell. Wanda stands freezing in the mist that descended in the interim."



West Highland Way, Scotland

Kevin Whitehead, Fig Tree Pocket, Brisbane

Camera: Olympus OM-D

Kevin: "After walking the 32km from Tyndrum to Kingshouse as part of the West Highland Way my friend and I were greeted by one of the locals putting on this pose in front of the impressive peak of Buachaille Etive Mor".

WINNERS ARE GRINNERS!

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OVERNIGHT WALKS

42 **QLD'S BEST OVERNIGHT HIKES**
Easy-to-get-to loop walks

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There's more to the harbour city than the bridge

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Taking the step from day walks to overnighters

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Garmin eTrex & Suunto Traverse GPS watch



An overnight walk in Croajingolong NP, Vic. Destination Gippsland.

In the loop

Great Walks showcases
10 overnight loop
walks in Queensland.

WORDS_LAURA BONESS. PHOTO_TOURISM QLD

Grand views over
Lamington NP.





An overnight walk that starts and ends at the same spot sounds perfect. That way you don't have to worry about swapping vehicles or trying to work out how you're going to get home. So with that in mind here are our 10 favourite overnight loop walks that showcase the tropical beauty of the Sunshine State.

Albert River Circuit, Lamington NP

Lamington NP offers some great remote bushwalking opportunities, including the 21.8km Albert River Circuit in the park's Green Mountains section. It's rated as a Class Four walk, requiring a moderate degree of fitness, previous experience and ankle supporting footwear. For an overnight hike, walkers can camp in Echo Point bush camp, located close to Echo Point lookout – you'll need to make an advance booking and be self-sufficient at this campsite.

The circuit branches right from the Border Track approximately 5km from the trailhead and heads to Echo Falls. It then follows a branch of the Albert River up to Echo Point lookout and its panoramic views of Mount Wagawn, Mount Durigan and the Tweed Range, before continuing east along the QLD-NSW border to connect with the Border Track.



Cooloola Great Walk sample

The Cooloola Great Walk is one of Queensland's 10 Great Walks, linking Noosa and Rainbow Beach via a system of high sand dunes known as the Cooloola Sandmass. This 108km, Class Four walk is usually done over five days, but there are two alternative routes on the last day and hikers can get a taster of the whole experience by connecting them.

Starting from Carlo carpark at the Great Walk's northern end, hikers can walk in to (and back from) Freshwater walkers camp (book online) either via Poona Lake (approximately 17.3km) or using the longer (24.7km) coastal route via Double Point Island. On the first option, you'll get to see Poona Lake, the highest perched lake in Cooloola (swimming isn't recommended). On the second, you'll get a look at Double Point Island and remember that Teewah beach is in full sun, so set out early and look for shorebirds.

Illinbah Circuit, Lamington NP

Located in Lamington NP's Binna Burra section, the 16.6km Illinbah Circuit is rated as a Class Five walk (requiring a high degree of experience and fitness). It can be turned into an overnight trip by staying at Illinbah bush camp near the Coomera River – advance bookings and self-sufficiency are required.

If you're walking clockwise, start from the carpark near the park information centre and descend through rainforest and open forest to the Coomera River. The circuit then follows the 'Old Cedar Road' – used by timber getters in the early 1900s – and crosses the Coomera River several times, before leaving the river and climbing the Beechmont Range to return to Binna Burra. The river crossings can be hazardous after heavy rain and shouldn't be attempted if the river is in flood. You can also walk anticlockwise, which may be less strenuous in hot weather.

Mount Donaldson circuit, Sundown NP

Further west (and to the south) on the QLD-NSW border, Sundown NP is home to several long distance walks in remote and rugged terrain – these longer walks are rated either class 4 or 5 and only fit and experienced walkers should attempt them. Bush camping (tent camping only, no facilities) is allowed throughout the park; advance bookings are required.

Starting from the Broadwater camping area at the park's southern entrance, the 24km (Class 5) Mount Donaldson circuit takes hikers up McAllisters Creek past Double Falls



A sublime view from Fraser Island.

RIGHT: D'Aguilar NP is well signposted.

BELOW LEFT: Lamington NP.



onto the southern slopes of Mount Donaldson. At the summit you can experience the views across the park and down into the gorge of Stony Creek, before continuing westward along the spur to the river and following this back to the camping ground. This walk takes two to three days and also connects to the Blue Gorge – Ooline Creek circuit, another long distance walk (30km, two-three days, Class 5).

Mount Lofty Circuit, Sundown NP

Located in Sundown NP's northeastern section, the 32km Mount Lofty Circuit takes walkers to the summit of Mount Lofty and on to Red Rock Gorge. You'll also walk through a variety of habitats,

such as grey box forest on the flats and yellow box on the hills. This walk is also rated as Class 5 and walkers should allow two to three days to complete it.

To reach Mount Lofty's summit, leave your car near the park's northeastern entrance and follow the old 4WD track across Back Creek and then up the firebreak. Head north to the Severn River and follow it downstream to Red Rock Creek, before making your way along the creek to Red Rock Falls. From here, you can make your way back down the vehicle track to the park entrance. Note: that if you're planning on hiking in Sundown NP, you should leave their trip details with rangers for safety reasons.

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Photo: Barry Slaven.

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Aquila loop, D'Aguilar NP

D'Aguilar NP is located on Brisbane's doorstep and is home to several walks that can be completed in a long day or turned into an overnight walk. One example is the 24km Aquila Loop (Class 4), which starts from Maiala day-use area and follows the Westside track past Western Window. Walkers then use a couple of management roads to reach England Creek and the England Creek bush camp (walk-in camping only, book online), with several waterholes just 10min down the road from the camp.

Follow England Creek Road to the top of Northbrook Mountain, with impressive views of England Creek Catchment as you near the top, and Northbrook Mountain bush camp (walk-in camping only, book online), 15min from the summit. The walk continues along the road to intersect with Lawton Road, which heads down to a saddle and up again before joining the Westside track and heading back to Maiala day-use area.

Cabbage Tree Range Loop, D'Aguilar NP

Another track located in the South D'Aguilar section of D'Aguilar NP, the 17km Cabbage Tree Range Loop can also be turned into an overnight walk by staying at the Light Line Road bush camp, a remote bush camp that can only be accessed by walking in.

The loop, (Class 4), starts near the Nebo Transfer station, following Dundas Road to Dundas Bush Camp and then along Cabbage Tree Road to Cabbage Tree Creek. Once over the creek, hikers walk up Job 6 Break to Light Line Road and along this to the bush camp. The next day the walk continues down Light Line Road before turning left onto Double Break and then around the gate onto Hammermeister Road. From here, walkers make their way to Mount Nebo Road and back to the transfer station.

Augies loop, D'Aguilar NP

D'Aguilar NP's South D'Aguilar section is also home to the 16km Augies loop, which uses 4WD drive tracks to explore this part of the park. The Class Four route can either be walked in a day or turned into a two-day walk with an overnight stay at the Scrub Road bush camp. This remote bush camping site is walk-in only (book online) and located in open eucalypt woodland among ironbarks, spotted gums and grey gums.

Starting from Bullockys Dam, on South Boundary Road, the walk follows several roads before crossing the creek and taking hikers up to Gold Creek Boundary Break. Following the break, you will reconnect with South Boundary Road and the Scrub Road bush camp. The next day the walk continues along South Boundary Road, past Augies Road, and heads back to the dam.

Lake McKenzie circuit from Central Station, Fraser Island

Just off the coast, another of Queensland's Great Walks allows you to explore Fraser Island's sand dunes, perched lakes and rainforests. The 90km Fraser Island Great Walk is usually done over six to eight days; you can also do an overnight loop walk linking Central Station and Lake Mackenzie for a taster. You will need a camping permit and to book your campsite online; you will also need to be self-sufficient and aware of dingoes.

There are two routes connecting Central Station and Lake Mackenzie – the first (6.6km) takes you through three different types of forest to Basin Lake, before making your way through banksia woodland, tall open forest and melaleuca wetland to the lake. The second (11.3km) takes you through Pile Valley and along an old forestry tramline, before heading through Blackbutts Forest to Lake Mackenzie.

Smiths and Douglas Tracks, Barron Gorge NP

Barron Gorge NP is home to a network of walking tracks that were used by Djabugandgi Bama and then gold miners, cattle drovers and rail workers. The two main routes, plus some of the linking trails, can be combined for an overnight trip; the trails vary in grade and hikers will need to be fit and experienced.

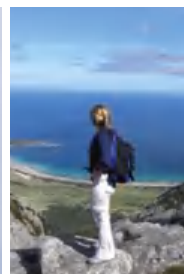
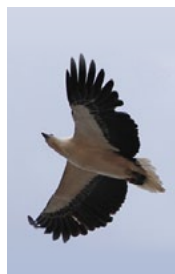
Starting from the Stoney Creek/Douglas trailhead, walkers can follow the Douglas and Djina-Wu Tracks (7.8km) to Speewah camping area, through rainforest with views of the coast. The next day follow the Djina-Wu Track and Smiths Track to the Gandal Wandun Track, which connects to the Douglas Track and the way back to the car (9km). Another, longer option (15km) is to follow the Yalbogie Track until it meets Smiths Track near Toby's lookout, then follow this section of Smiths Track back to the Gandal Wandun and Douglas Tracks.



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GREAT OVERNIGHT WALKS

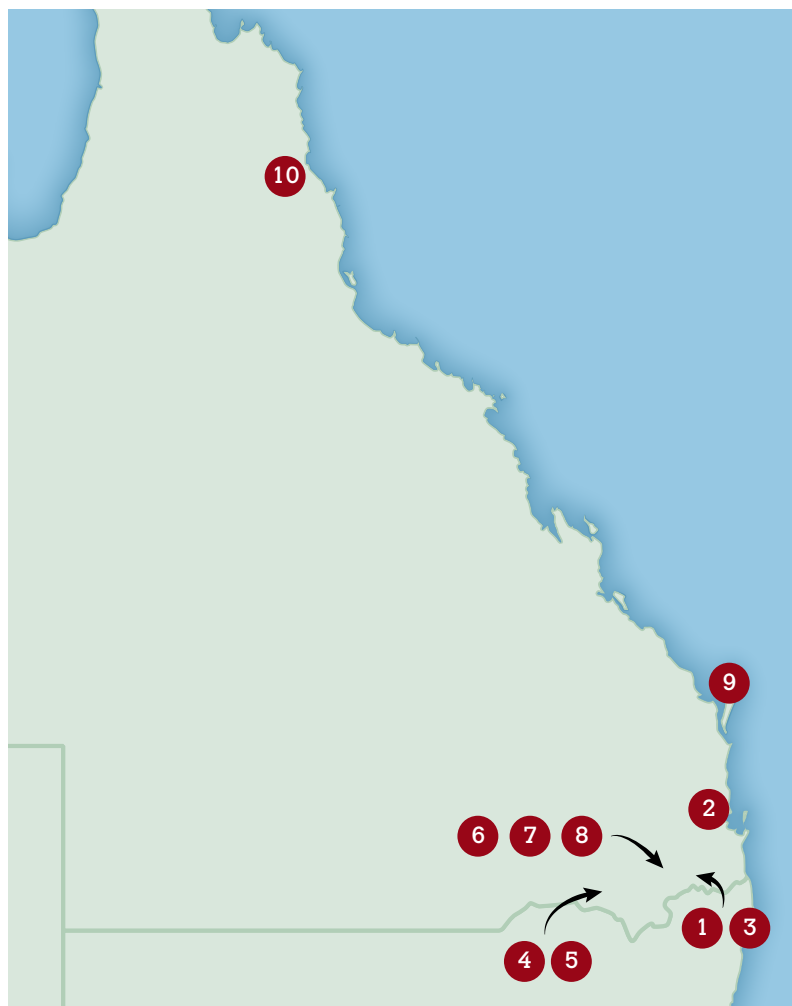
QLD'S BEST LOOP TRAILS

Nightfall Wilderness
Camp, Lamington NP.

“You will also need to be self-sufficient and aware of dingoes”

Walk notes **TEN OVERNIGHT LOOP WALKS, QLD**

Time/Distance: 3 days/38km | Degree: moderate



Walknotes

1. Albert River Circuit, Lamington NP
2. Cooloola Great Walk sample
3. Illinbah Circuit, Lamington NP
4. Mount Donaldson circuit, Sundown NP
5. Mount Lofty Circuit, Sundown NP
6. Aquila loop, D'Aguilar NP
7. Cabbage Tree Range Loop, D'Aguilar NP
8. Augies loop, D'Aguilar NP
9. Lake McKenzie circuit from Central Station, Fraser Island
10. Smiths and Douglas Tracks, Barron Gorge NP

i NEED TO KNOW



For info on any of the national parks mentioned in this story visit parks.npsr.qld.gov.au



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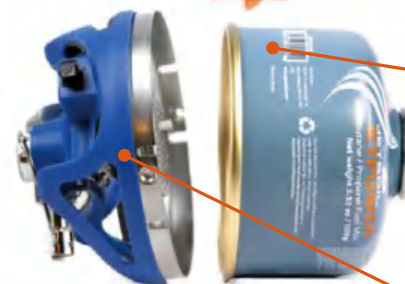
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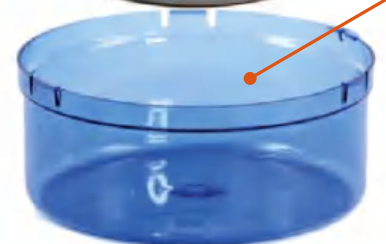


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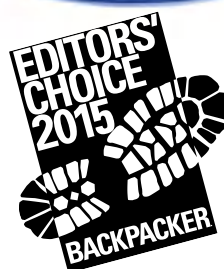
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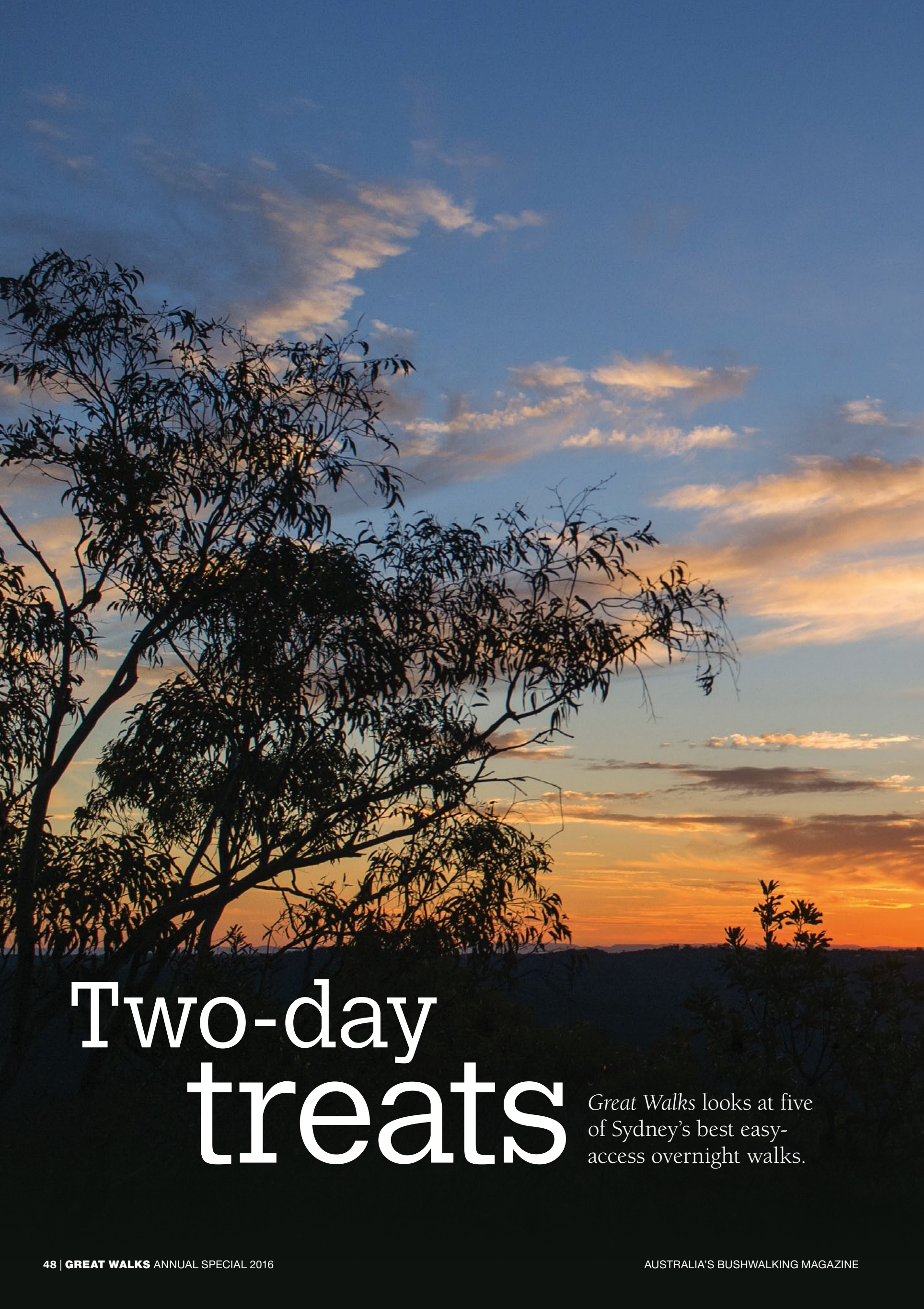
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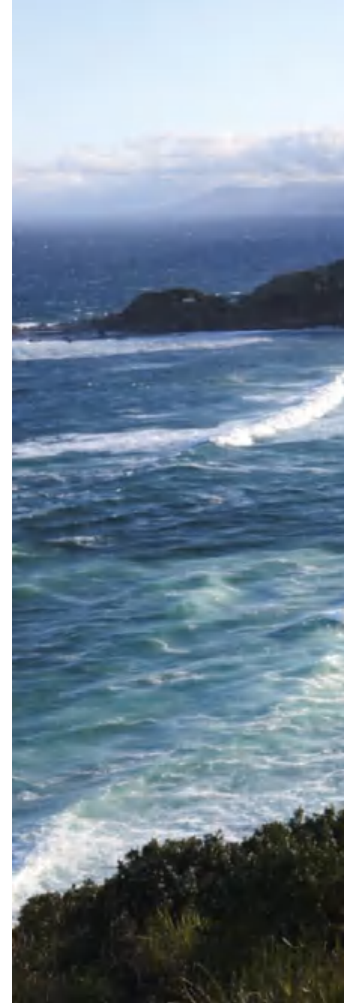


Two-day treats

Great Walks looks at five of Sydney's best easy-access overnight walks.



Berowra's ridge-top
campsite affords
spectacular sunset views.



LEFT: The Milky Way rises above the bush at Uloola Falls.

ABOVE: North Era Beach is the Coast Track's only designated campground.

RIGHT: Inspecting a giant gyamea lily near Kingfisher Pool.

Sydney is a city full of opportunities, especially when it comes to national parks. However, my newly found passion for overnight bushwalks has coincided with parenthood and my most time-poor period to date. Determined not to let this challenge hold me back, I decided to seek out five of Sydney's best weekend walks. My only criteria: they had to be accessible by public transport and I had to be home in time for a family dinner on Sunday.

The Coast Track, Royal NP

No survey of Sydney's overnight walks is complete without the iconic trail that links up the townships of Bundeena and Otford in Australia's first national park. I completed the walk with my oldest friend John. It was his first overnight hike.

We met up at Cronulla before jumping on a quaint ferry to Bundeena, where a brief walk through quiet streets took us to the track head. Soon, the service trail emerged onto the white sandstone cliffs overlooking Little Marley Beach. The walk ahead panned out in front of us: a series of massive, heath-covered headlands that jutted out into wild ocean. Each would hide secluded bays and beaches, and paths lined by flowering banksia, pig face and pea flowers.

The walking conditions were not particularly pleasant, however, with a howling southerly in full swing. We relished the shelter of north-facing cliffs and hills, knowing we would be almost blown off our feet when we crested them. By the time we arrived at the North Era beach campground, our skin was salt-crusted from sea spray.

Though day two was much shorter, we were on the road shortly after sunrise in a light drizzle. The wind had dropped and we enjoyed the more verdant landscape of this section. Arriving at Otford gave us a great sense of satisfaction as we

gazed north at the dark cliff lines that zig-zagged back to Bundeena. And what did John make of his first overnight hike? Despite a knee injury and some serious pain, he was hooked.

Uloola Falls Walk, Royal NP

Even though they are in the same national park, the contrast between this walk and the Coast Track could not be starker. While the latter features grandiose cliff-top views, Uloola Falls takes you into hidden forest gullies, over tree-lined ridges and past the striking serenity of Karloo Pool. Connecting Heathcote and Waterfall stations, the walk could easily be completed as a day walk but I decided to make this my first solo overnigher.

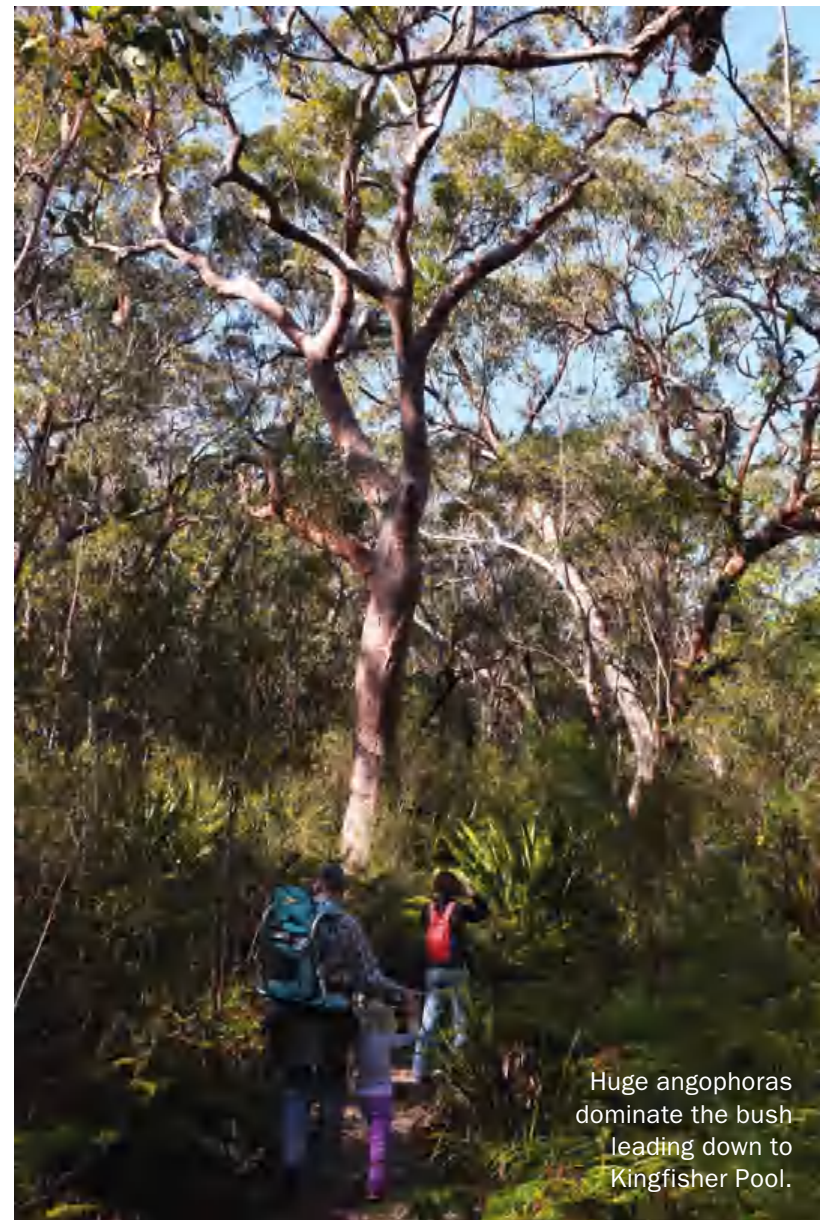
Karloo Pool is the definite highlight: a small creek flows over rock into a perfectly still, deep pool from the edge of which rises a steep, forested hill. I ate lunch here in solitude, alone except for a rock warbler flitting around me.

A few kilometres further lies Uloola Falls campground and its six bush sites. From the top of the falls that night, I watched dark clouds skim above the bush and imagined the sea that lay beyond them.

The walk out followed a sandy fire trail. While fire trails are never as wild an experience as off-track or bush track walking, it had rained that morning and a heavy fog now settled around me, lending an eerie presence to the heath and forest. A few hours later, I would step off the train and join the family for lunch.

Mt Kuring-gai to Brooklyn, Kuring-gai Chase NP

'Normally, if you told me to walk up that hill,' said John as we eyed off the unforgiving 200m ascent towards Naa Badu lookout near Berowra, 'I'd tell you to get stuffed.'



Huge angophoras dominate the bush leading down to Kingfisher Pool.

“ Sandy beaches and dramatic escarpment emerged around one bend or the next. ”

And this was only the first ascent of the estimated 1650m in store for us. My rock-climbing partner Garry (another overnight hiking virgin) had joined us for the pain ahead. From Mt Kuring-gai station, we followed a trail down to Calna Creek before passing an expansive salt marsh, skirted by casuarinas.

We were sweaty and breathless by the time we arrived at the lookout, from where we could see Berowra Creek snake back to its source. The trail descended to Berowra Waters, which held the promise of a short ferry ride to a fish and chips shop. Knowing our ridge-top campsite was dry, we stocked up on water before tackling 350-metres of climbing with unbalanced, heavy packs.

The next morning we stopped at Cowan's general store for a bacon and egg roll, having walked into and out of the most striking rainforest gully to this point. From there the climbs just kept coming. John's knee gave out again and Garry and I ended up dividing most of his pack between us.

By the time we emerged onto the fire trail to Brooklyn (which Garry would describe as the 'longest 6km' of his life), we were all suffering. The fire trail proved to be somewhat monotonous and concluded with a ridiculously steep descent. The flip side? Cold beer at the Anglers Rest Hotel on the shores of the Hawkesbury River and the knowledge that we had walked through a prehistoric landscape that seems utterly impenetrable when viewed from a speeding car on the F3.

Glenbrook to Springwood, Blue Mountains

Up until this walk, the lower Blue Mountains had just been a pit stop as we drove to Blackheath or Katoomba. Boy, was I missing out? Desperate to fit in a solo walk before the arrival of summer, I alighted at Glenbrook Station one Saturday morning and walked down to Blue Pool, a popular swimming spot. Several groups were returning after a dip to escape a sweltering November day. Though conditions were harsh, I soon found myself entranced by a gorge landscape that felt so remote it was hard to believe suburbia sat only a few kilometres to the East.

Scrambling along the overgrown and at times indistinct bush track that contours Glenbrook Creek, I then climbed to St Helena Ridge before descending back into Glenbrook Gorge. Here I would camp for the night in a sandy clearing next to the creek.

Along the way, fields of flannel flowers were in bloom across the ridge. The heat was bearable thanks to shaded spots and plentiful water in the creek (treated before drinking). Sandy beaches and dramatic escarpment emerged around one bend or the next.

I hadn't seen a single person since leaving Blue Pool: the campsite and an experience of utter peace were mine alone as I drank a glass of shiraz, watching light drain from the ridge above me.

The next day, I woke to cooler temperatures and clear skies before tackling another overgrown track, cut off by fallen

trees at semi-regular intervals. Walking through rainforest, I followed sassafras trees out of the gorge, before re-emerging in Springwood. This was one of the most stunning walks I've ever done and the impression still endures. It's hard to believe I could get there by public transport in under two hours.


Kingfisher Pool, Heathcote NP

This modest walk is short, lands at a lovely swimming hole and is home to ecosystems that feel untouched. I decided to make it my daughter Marilla's first overnight walk and enlisted some friends. The 1.8km track to Kingfisher Pool from Waterfall leads down some level steps before heading down a steep rocky path.

The campground is next to Heathcote Creek and features a picnic table, some tent sites and a pit toilet. After a sweaty walk, the kids' mind was on Kingfisher Pool. After pitching tents, we walked to a serene body of water bounded by angophoras and scrub on one side and a natural rock amphitheatre on the other.

I swam out with Marilla on my back through surprisingly warm water. We perched on a submerged, flat boulder and looked back at the sandstone formations, lit up by late afternoon sun.

We woke at dawn the next day and went for a swim before breaking camp. The children were happy to explore Heathcote creek's rock platforms while we packed, sliding down a small opening into a cave that emerged a few metres downstream.

Getting three exhausted kids up the trail required cajoling but watching them connected with nature was all worth it. 

Sublime ocean cliffs and coastal heath define The Coast Track.

Walk notes

5 SYDNEY OVERNIGHTERS



Walks notes

All walks start and finish near public transport. Make sure you check the timetables, especially for the return leg.

1. The Coast Track, Royal National Park – 28km, Moderate

Navigation is easy but we took a wrong turn near Burning Palms Beach on Day 2. Stock up on water at Garie Beach and Wattamolla.

2. Uloola Falls Walk, Royal National Park – 12km, Easy/Moderate

Follow a bush track to Karloo Pool and then signs to Uloola Falls. On Day 2, a fire trail leads to Waterfall.

3. Mt Kuring-gai to Brooklyn, Kuring-gai Chase National Park – 32km, Hard.

Make sure you are fit before tackling this climb-fest. Not recommended in Summer.

4. Glenbrook to Springwood, Blue Mountains – 20km, Moderate/Hard


This walk starts on the Blue Pool trail before following a very rough bush track along Glenbrook Creek. Take a compass and topographic map.

5. Kingfisher Pool, Heathcote National Park – 3.6km, Easy.

After a steep descent, the walk flattens out. There are a few intersecting trails so take detailed track notes.



NEED TO KNOW

For more info on these walking areas visit  www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Walkers should take a topographic map and compass: one wrong turn is all it takes to ruin the shortest of walks. Always leave a detailed itinerary with someone, especially if walking solo. Treat water before drinking: Sydney is Australia's biggest population centre and that means lots of run-off.

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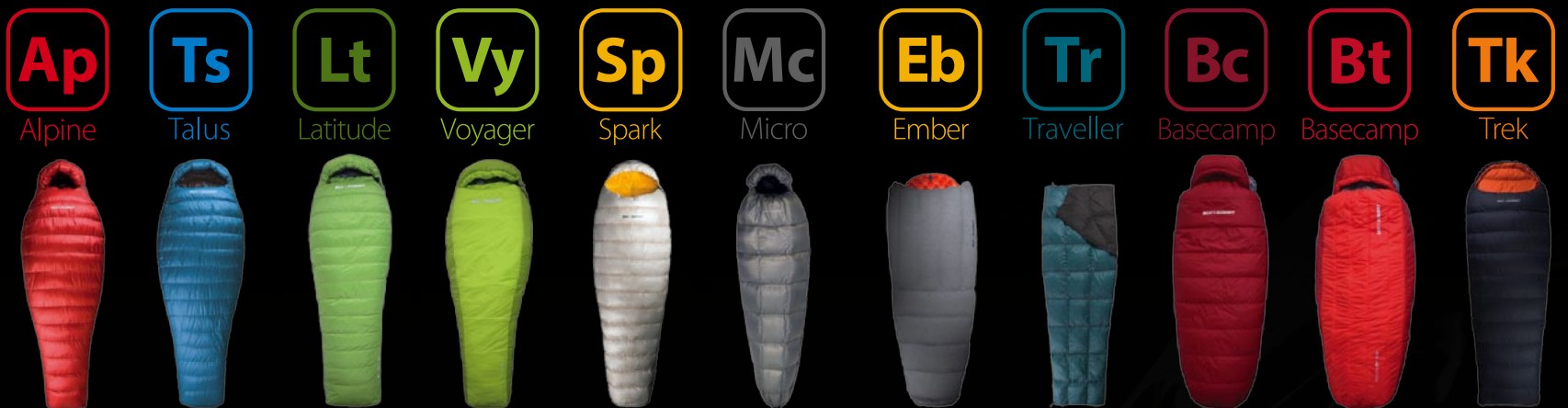


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Team Great Walks 2015:
(L to R) team coach Brent
McKean, Amanda Bryan,
Lindy Hughson, Sophie
Harricks and Emma Logan.

Blood, sweat & tears

There's no way around it. Taking on the 100km Oxfam Trailwalker will hurt. But as Team Great Walks knows, it's all worth it in the end.

If you've never heard of the Oxfam Trailwalker picture this. Teams of four have 48 hours to walk 100km through thick bush. It's a gruelling, challenging event where commitment, self-belief and teamwork are the traits you need to be successful. Team Great Walks 2015 share their experiences.

Amanda Bryan

"As Oxfam Trailwalker first-timers, it didn't matter how much training we'd done, or how many blister strapping YouTube clips we'd watched, one big very unanswered question remained: are we actually capable of walking 100km?"

Looking back, I now understand why Trailwalker is a team event. The team structure provides momentum – when you're feeling weak, the others are strong – and this carries you along like a stream.

There are other key things that helped propel us from checkpoint to checkpoint – our fantastic support team, who worked around the clock to provide fuel, foot massages and energy.

The change of day into night – and then night into day – and then day into night again – gave a psychological boost, and the fact that we'd done heaps of hill training and we knew the track inside-out also proved to be a massive advantage.

Oxfam Trailwalker offered me a unique opportunity to push my body and my mind to the brink, and walking across that finish line – well that was just indescribable."

Lindy Hughson

"This was by far the most physically challenging adventure I have ever undertaken. I knew I would hurt. I knew I would be tired. But I had no idea of the extent of the discomfort physically and mentally, particularly as the night wore on into the wee hours and our progress slowed. At no point did I ever think of giving up, and I knew every member of the team was fighting their own battles but staying completely committed to the journey.

And there is something so uplifting about overcoming adversity in your darkest hour and coming out the other side with the mental strength to keep moving when your body is asking you why. Repeatedly and unrelentingly. There were times when I had to remind myself that what we were doing had a higher collective purpose, that every step was a step closer to making a difference in the lives of people who have endured so much more hardship than we were at that time on the trail.

There were moments when I just indulged my emotions, let a few tears leak out and a few selfish thoughts creep in. And that's where our support crew was so amazing. They read us all so well, gathered us into their welcoming fold as we arrived at each checkpoint, revived and restored us and gave us the will and energy to get to the next point.

Our crew's care, concern and unconditional support was one of the things I found most overwhelming, especially in the days following the walk when I realised more fully the extent of their effort and commitment.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

1. Great Walks editor Brent McKean attends to Lindy's sore feet.
2. 24 hours into the walk and still smiling!
3. 37 hours later Team Great Walks triumphantly finishes. Well done girls!



What I enjoyed most was the many hours of training on the beautiful nature trails, working towards the goal as a team and knowing that when we set out we were fully prepared. It was exhausting and exhilarating. That we crossed the finish line together as a team was one of the proudest moments of my life.”

Sophie Harricks

“For me, my greatest challenge was at 8am after 23 hours of walking. The new day had broken and we had been told we would feel reinvigorated. To the contrary, I was nose-diving at a fast pace. It turns out there is such a thing as over-hydration. With extremely low blood sugar the bushes blur and change shape. You struggle to walk straight, and the tears spill uncontrollably. “You’re not the energiser bunny now. There is nothing that can be laughed at. You’re a failure and a disappointment to your team.” Those were my darkest thoughts.

Surprisingly, those thoughts are what leads me into why I would encourage everybody to do it. You rise out of that dark place. Bad thoughts pass, your support team feeds you, your body and mind recharge and your team mates hug you and lift you back up.

Half the journey is the training in the lead up. For me, that meant spending 9-12 hours each weekend with women that I grew to utterly admire. We formed an incredible bond and I realised that if we could spend hours each weekend sharing life stories, mastering the stealth bush pee, and laughing with one another... what’s another 37 hours!”



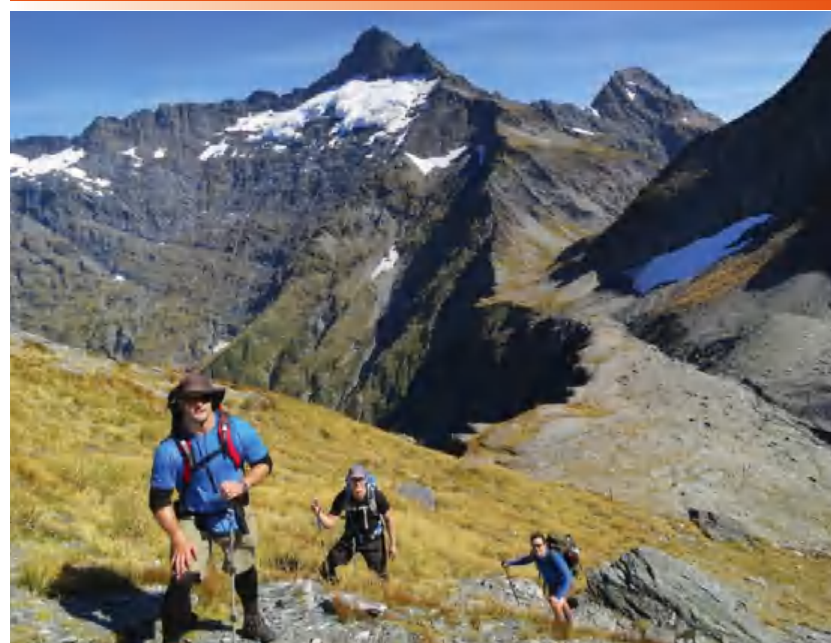
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For info on next year’s Oxfam Trailwalker visit: trailwalker.oxfam.org.au

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Website: www.ahnu.com.au



Therm-a-Rest Evolite sleeping mat

For those that pack fast and light, the Evolite uses AirFrame construction that's ultralight and provides high-loft comfort and compactness. Self-inflating, leaving you time to make a cuppa while you wait, also within the mat it has Atmos Foam beams for stability and support for a good night's rest.

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Helinox Ground Chair

Taking outdoor comfort to a new level of lightweight portability, Helinox allows you to take a seat and relax while you watch the sunset with your dinner. It uses DAC TH72M strong alloy and sits on a slight recline lower to the ground. It is easily assembled using shock-cord joints. Weighing just 610gm it can carry up to 120kg!

Online price: \$124

Website: www.helinox.com.au



Garmin Fenix 3 GPS watch

This multisport GPS works like a smartwatch to easily navigate on and off the beaten track. It marks locations/campsites and records GPS breadcrumb trails. Its TracBack feature can also reverse to navigate back to starting point. It's built for harsh conditions and water rated to 100m.

RRP: \$699 | Website: www.garmin.com.au



Outdoor Research Helium HD jacket womens

Named Helium because it's ultralight, the Helium HD is now packed with many more features. It's waterproof and breathable, with pit zips for ventilation where it's needed most. It has Velcro cuff closures and a large wire brimmed hood, on 30D ripstop, Pertex Shield fabric.

RRP: \$299.95

Website: www.intertrek.com.au



Helinox Lite Cot camp stretcher

Helinox made their Cot One camp stretcher even lighter, with the Lite Cot weighing in at 1.3kg. It comes with four legs; however it can also be assembled using three for young campers who don't weigh much. It's easy to put together with shock-cord joints and virtually assembles itself.

Online price: \$288

Website: www.helinox.com.au





Scarpa Moraine Plus Mid GTX

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Website: www.outdooragencies.com.au



Gondwana men's Buchanan Down Under jacket

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Asolo Revert Gore-Tex hiking boots mens

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The Sandy and Fraser Convertible Pants allow you to change from long to short in an instant. These stylish pants (UPF 30+, DWR, Quickdry) feature a durable nylon fabric that is lightweight, moisture wicking and water resistant. The pant legs unzip at the seams, converting your pants into shorts.

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Website: www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au



Producer by trade, Caro started lotsafreshair.com to inspire people to get outdoors and remove barriers to bushwalking.

Leap of faith

Caro Ryan offers sound advice for those who are finding going from day walks to overnights a bit daunting.

Of all the steps we take out on the track, sometimes it can seem that the biggest leap we make of all is our first overnight bushwalk. The first time we rely totally on our own ability to plan and pack exactly what we need and commit our bodies to sleeping closer to the ground than we've ever done before.

I'm always fascinated by the number of people who seem to feel as though it's some massive invisible and impossible threshold, somehow akin to an ancient tribal right of passage demanding total commitment, brutal physical submission and emotional scarring. Anyone would think they're being asked to cut off a piece of their own flesh!

If you've felt that you'd like to try staying out overnight, I've got some good news for you. It's just as simple as planning for a day walk, except you don't have to go home when the sun goes down.

Think of it as simply taking everything you would normally pack on a day walk (link to how to pack for a day walk video?), plus just a few things more. If it's your first time, here's some simple ways to make the transition as easy as possible:

Food

Start by writing a simple planner of how many meals and their types you're going to need. For a typical weekend bushwalk

that starts on Saturday morning and sees you back at the car late afternoon Sunday, this would mean packing 1 breakfast, 2 lunches, 1 dinner + snacks.

If you've been doing day walks for a while, then you're probably already comfortable with packing and carrying your lunch and snacks. Keep it really simple and start with lightweight things available from your supermarket like crackers such as VitaWheats, sachets of tuna/salmon, hard cheese, sundried tomatoes or salami.

When it comes to breakfasts, they're the easiest of all. Just pop a serve of your favourite cereal in a ziploc bag, along with a generous dessertspoon of powdered milk powder. Then all you need to do is simply add some drinking water to the bag and you can eat straight out of the bag. Just be careful with some types of muesli or cornflakes as they have sharp edges that could pierce the bag!

For dinner, think about pasta n' sauce packets like a carbonara style one you can simply add a sachet of tuna too. To be honest though, you won't die if you eat the same thing for dinner that you did for lunch. If you do that, then you also remove the need to cook something up by taking a stove or having a campfire, which if you're feeling a bit overwhelmed, is one less thing to think about. Easy!

Pack weight

Aim to be carrying no more than 10kgs* +water and look at sharing items, like splitting up the different parts of a two-person tent, between the two people. This is key as usually the tent (especially if you're using a traditional camping tent as opposed to a lighter weight hiking tent) is going to be the heaviest thing you have to carry. It's also going to be one of the most expensive things to buy, so it's not uncommon for people to 'test' out whether they like overnight walks with a heavy tent before they decide if they want to invest more money in buying a lighter one.

Set yourself up for success

For your first overnight walk, chances are that your pack will be the heaviest you've ever carried on a bushwalk, which will take some getting used to. If you're building up to an overnight walk (and especially if it's going to be an extended walk over several days), you'll enjoy the



Enjoying an overnight hike in the Grampians. Vic Tourism.

BELOW: Dinner at a campsite should be social occasion. Larapinta Trail. NT Tourism.

experience much more if your body (and feet) is familiar with how an overnight pack feels. Try and get some training in by going for walks around your neighbourhood with extra weight in your pack. Carrying water is an easy way of doing this where one litre = one kilo. Just remember to judge this by how many hours a day you plan on being on your feet when you finally do that overnight walk. A pack might be fine after one hour, but if you're planning to be walking for six hours over rough terrain, you might not feel so fine about it!

Grab a packing list from an experienced walker

You find one at my website: www.lotsafreshair.com

There's a few things you're not likely to find on an experienced overnight walkers packing list:

1. Change of clothes (other than thermals to put on at night).
Yes, it's true – us walkers can smell a bit, but we're in good company when we all do. I've been known to wear the same t-shirt for seven days in the Kimberleys, where temps can get up to 43°C.
2. Canned Food – they're not only bulky and heavy, but you need to carry that tin out with you.
3. Huge amounts of water – water is an absolute essential to have with you at all times, however the amount you carry will depend on the route you're taking and if you can pick up water on the way. Regardless of the season, I always start with two litres, but ensure that I carry some method of water purification so I can treat it when I find it. When you're starting out, plan to camp near a creek or river so you've got easy access to water for cooking, drinking and stocking up for the return journey home. When you've got some trips under your belt and are comfortable with a heavier pack, that's when you can think about 'high camps', where you're lugging extra water up to a viewpoint for a killer sunset/sunrise camp.

Choose a walk wisely

For your first overnight walk, be gentle on yourself by choosing a shorter and easier walk than you would normally consider for a day walk. Aim for a half day walk (no more than four-five hours) on both days, which gives you ample time to set up your tent and campsite in daylight hours, lets you take your time re-packing on the second day and if you're finding it takes a while to get used to the heavier pack, you aren't struggling with the pace to reach your destinations in time.

BACK TO BASICS

CARO RYAN

The boogey man isn't out there

I reckon the most common complaint people have about camping is having to get up for the 3am pee. Apart from having to emerge from your snuggly sleeping bag cocoon, some people genuinely struggle with being alone in the bush, in the dark. My advice to you is all about mindset. It's about telling yourself that there's nothing there in the dark that isn't there in the day. Be firm against your fears and decisive in your action to get out of bed, go pee, come back and fall asleep again. Trust me, the longer you leave these things, trying to hold on until morning, the worse sleep you'll have and less chance of enjoying your first overnight experience.

Take good friends with you

It can be fun discovering how to do overnight walks with friends who are in the same boat as you. Laughing as you learn through mistakes or trial and error and enjoying the journey to independence, together. However, there can be no better way to learn than by observing (and asking) what experienced friends do. Here's where I plug joining a bushwalking or tramping club – it's where I learnt everything I know!



NEED TO KNOW

For more of Caro's advice and videos check out www.lotsafreshair.com

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Cutting-edge kit

Great Walks has a play with two new tech products ideal for your next bushbash.

Garmin eTrex Touch 35t GPS receiver

Whether you're bushwalking or geocaching the Garmin eTrex Touch 35t GPS unit has plenty to offer. This easy-to-use navigation device will indicate your current position and lay digital breadcrumbs showing where you've been. The handheld unit's 2.6" 65K colour sunlight-readable screen displays your position in an easy-to-read manner. Control of all functions are via the touch screen.

This unit utilises both GPS and GLONASS satellites for quicker signal acquisition. The receiver can also interpret Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS) signals so you can receive info from terrestrial antennas even when your view of the sky is obstructed. A worldwide basemap and TOPO Australian and NZ Lite map is stored on the unit's memory so you'll always have an idea of where you are. You can also upload additional maps to the system.

The unit's built-in 3-axis tilt-compensated electronic compass shows your heading even while standing still,

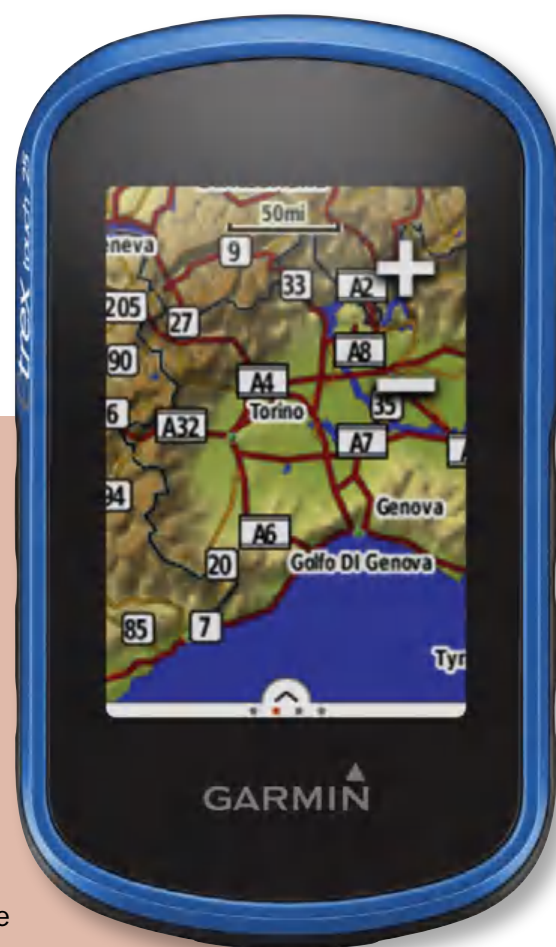
no matter how it's positioned. It also houses a barometric altimeter which tracks changes in pressure to pinpoint your precise altitude, this also lets you plot barometric pressure over time which can help you keep an eye on changing weather conditions.

You can share the data you recorded on your receiver wirelessly with other compatible Garmin hand-held devices, such as the Montana and Oregon series. Just bring the units close together and press send to transfer waypoints, tracks, routes and geocaches.

Weight: 159gm (with batteries)

RRP: \$489

Website: www.garmin.com/en-AU/



Suunto Traverse watch

The Suunto Traverse is definitely more than just an everyday watch. With up to 100 hours of battery life and integrated GPS + GLONASS (a

Russian satellite navigation system that's comparable to the American GPS system) for fast fix and high accuracy, you can navigate to waypoints or along routes on your outdoor adventure. You can also plan routes or discover ready-made tracks on detailed topo maps, and retrace your steps or take the shortest route back with the GPS to guide you.

There are plenty of other handy features – there's a flashlight for short-range lighting, an altimeter for accurate elevation and cumulatives and it's water-resistant to 100m.

The sunrise/sunset times let you know the hours of daylight you have to work with, barometric trend predicts weather changes, there's a storm alarm to alert you if you need to start looking for shelter... and vibration makes the alarms more noticeable.

But it's also about simplicity – the Traverse allows you to focus on your hike, not operating your watch. There's QuickStart activity recording, you can QuickSave points of interest with one button press and easily scroll through all of the info in a single mode. Plus it keeps you up to date with seeing texts, calls and push notifications on your watch, and tracks your daily activity with calories and steps.

RRP: \$549.99

Website: www.suunto.com/en-AU

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Great Walks is giving away a Suunto Traverse GPS watch. To be in the running to win it simply email your name and address to editor@greatwalks.com.au (subject: Suunto Traverse) and we'll pick a winner. Emails must be received by Monday December 7.



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A week in the Never Never

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Elliot Ridge on
the Great Ocean
Walk. Parks Vic



There's plenty to see at
Girringun NP, TQ
BELOW: Johanna Beach on the
Great Ocean Walk, Parks Vic.

Great Ocean Walk, Vic

Length: 96km/5-7 days

Grade: Moderate

Start: Apollo Bay

Finish: Glenample Homestead

Best time: March-May, September-November

Website: www.greatoceanwalk.com.au

The Great Ocean Walk follows the same sweeping views as Victoria's Great Ocean Road but the carbon footprint is a lot smaller. Starting at the wide, crescent-shaped beach of Apollo Bay, the walk passes through the Otway National Park to Blanket Bay and Castle Cove before making its way past towering cliffs to the surf beaches around Johanna. One of the more iconic images of the Great Ocean Walk are the large rusting anchors set in the sands of Wreck Beach belonging to the Marie Gabrielle and the Fiji, both wrecked in the 1800s. The walk ends at Glenample Homestead, within walking distance of The Twelve Apostles.

Carnarvon Great Walk, Qld

Length: 90km/5-6 days

Grade: Moderate to challenging

Start: Carnarvon Gorge

Finish: Carnarvon Gorge

Best time: April-September

Website: www.npsr.qld.gov.au

Walk the trails of the Carnarvon Great Walk to experience a remote and beautiful landscape of towering sandstone cliffs, sweeping tablelands and shaded side-gorges. This 90km circuit track links Carnarvon Gorge and Mount Moffatt sections of Carnarvon National Park. In addition to the beautiful bushland and forest, walkers will be able to see some of the finest examples of Aboriginal rock art in Australia. Campgrounds will be located at various locations along the walk, including Gadds Camp, Big Bend and Foleys Spring. The walk traverses the Consuelo



Tableland, dubbed 'the Roof of Queensland', and at 1200m provides spectacular panoramas before heading back down to Carnarvon Gorge.

Port Davey Track, Tas

Length: 70km/4-5 days

Grade: Challenging

Start: Melaleuca

Finish: Scotts Peak Road

Best time: November-March

Website: www.parks.tas.gov.au

The Port Davey Track is notorious for its relentless mud but its glorious isolation more than makes up for this. Access is tricky and involves a flight or boat trip in or out of Melaleuca. The track lies within the rugged Southwest National Park and can be combined with the equally remote South Coast Track for those game enough to conquer yet more swamps. Its magnificent scenery and difficult access makes this a must-do for those who really want to get away from it all.



South Coast Track, Tas

Length: 84km/6-8 days

Grade: Moderate to challenging

Start: Melaleuca

Finish: Cockle Creek

Best time: November-March

Website: www.parks.tas.gov.au

Hard to access, and at times knee-deep in mud, cold and rainy, the South Coast Track is all that a real wilderness walk should be and more. The start or finish point at Cockle Creek can be driven to but to get to or from the other end at Melaleuca involves a flight or boat trip. The track follows the southern coastline of Tasmania, on the edge of one of the world's largest temperate wilderness areas. It offers fantastic views and a real sense of isolation and peace. The mud has receded somewhat through track maintenance but it's still very muddy in places, especially after sustained rainfall, which is often. Can be combined with the 70km Port Davey Track which meets the South Coast Track at Melaleuca.

Overland Track, Tas

Length: 65km/6 days

Grade: Moderate

Start: Cradle Mountain

Finish: Lake St Clair

Best time: Walking season is November-30 April

Website: www.parks.tas.gov.au

Australia's most famous long walk is also probably its busiest. To try and limit damage to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area the Overland Track passes through, a booking system was set up some time ago. The is designed to manage between 50 and 60 departures per day during peak walking season, including 30 or so independent bushwalkers. During the booking period walkers are required to walk the track from north to south (Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair). For all its regulation, the track is still true blue wilderness walk, travelling through stunning dolerite ranges from Tasmania's most photogenic mountain

to Australia's deepest lake. The Overland Track should be on every bushwalker's to-do list just like every Australian should visit Uluru at least once in their life.

Penguin Cradle Track, Tas

Length: 80km/5-7 days

Grade: Challenging

Start: Penguin

Finish: Cradle Mountain

Best time: November-April

Website: www.nwwc.org.au

Away from the managed bustle of the Overland Track, the Penguin Cradle Track affords similarly spectacular scenery without the crowds. Developed by the North West Walking Club, the track has several crossroad access points, enabling it to be split into four long day walks. The track follows the valley of the Leven River from the coast to near its source, through woodland and rainforest and treks up onto the rugged Black Bluff Range and on to Cradle Mountain. Combining the Penguin Cradle with the Overland Track makes for a challenging but rewarding two week walk.



Carnarvon NP in all its glory. TQ.
INSET: On the iconic Overland Track. Tourism Tas.

Wet Tropics Great Walk, Qld

Length: 110km/5-6 days

Grade: Moderate

Start: Wallaman Falls, Girringun NP

Finish: Blencoe Falls, Girringun NP

Best time: June-September

Website: www.npsr.qld.gov.au

The Wet Tropics Great Walk takes walkers through North Queensland's Wet Tropics World Heritage listed area in

“ The track allows walkers to view the transition from rainforest to open eucalypt. ”

Girringun National Park and the Einasleigh Uplands bioregion. It is broken into three sections and starts at Wallaman Falls, the largest single-drop waterfall in Australia. The first section to Yamanie affords walkers an option to head east above the Herbert River to Henrietta Gate (38km/2 days) rather than carry on west up the stunning Herbert River Gorge to Blencoe Falls. The track allows walkers to view the transition from rainforest to open eucalypt forest and provides opportunities to catch glimpses of elusive native wildlife including playtpuses, Southern cassowaries, mahogany gliders and ancient cycads.

Jatbula Trail, NT

Length: 66km/5 days

Grade: Moderate-challenging

Start: Katherine Gorge

Finish: Edith Falls

Best time: May-August

Website: www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au



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“The distance between camps is greater, facilities are minimal and the area is remote.”

Situated amongst the stunning ancient landscape of Nitmiluk National Park, the Jatbula Trail follows the route travelled by generations of Jawoyn people, from Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) to Leliyn (Edith Falls). Following the western edge of the Arnhem Land Escarpment, the trail traverses sandstone plateau scrub, woodlands, open forest, sandstone monsoon forest and riverine landscapes. The trail was named after Jawoyn Traditional Owner Peter Jatbula who was instrumental in securing land rights for his people and who walked the route of the trail with his family.

Fraser Island Great Walk, Qld

Length: 90km/7 days

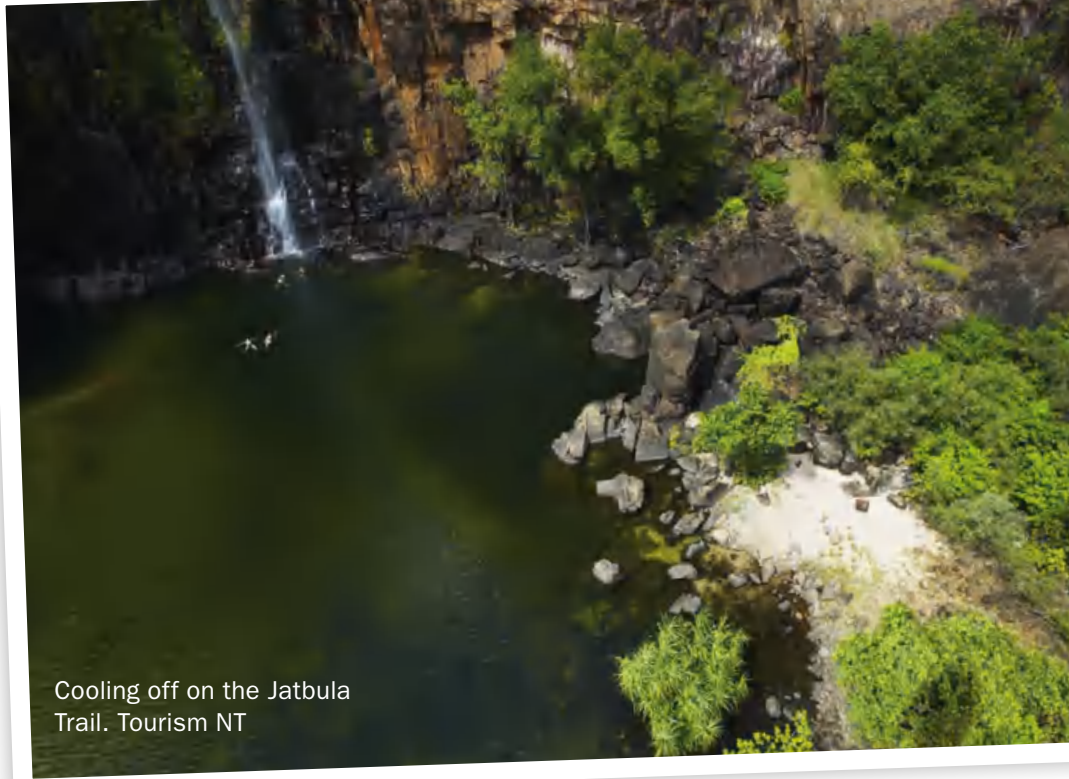
Grade: Moderate

Start: Dilli Village

Finish: Happy Valley

Best time: April-September

Website: www.npsr.qld.gov.au



Cooling off on the Jatbula Trail. Tourism NT

The Fraser Island Great Walk incorporates the existing three-day circuit based around the Central Station area and includes new tracks north to Happy Valley. The walk delivers everything you'd expect from Fraser Island, including coastal heathland, mangrove forest, woodland and subtropical rainforest, crystal-clear lakes and towering sand dunes. It passes well known sites such as Lake McKenzie, Wanggoolba Creek, Lake Wabby and Central Station. The Fraser Island Great Walk on the whole is a well-defined sandy track but does include sections of soft sand. The section north of Lake Wabby is not designed for beginners – the distance between camps is greater, facilities are minimal and the area is remote.

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Hard yakka, on Tassie's
South Coast track.
Tourism Tas.



Cape to Cape Track, WA

Length: 135km/7 days

Grade: Moderate

Start: Cape Naturaliste

Finish: Cape Leeuwin

Best time: April-October

Website: parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au

Western Australia's famous Cape to Cape Track runs for 135km across the far southwestern corner of the state. The track shadows the coast for most of its length, rewarding walkers with spectacular clifftop views, coastal wildflowers

and deserted beaches. The track, which runs via the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge between the lighthouses of Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin, also passes through some inland sections. The best of these is the Boranup karri forest.

Wilderness Coast Walk, Vic

Length: 100km/7 days

Grade: Moderate

Start: Sydenham Inlet

Finish: Mallacoota

Best time: October-May

Website: www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

The Wilderness Coast Walk runs through the Croajingolong National Park, designated a

World Biosphere Region and one of the few remaining pristine coastal environments in southeastern Australia. It passes through Sandpatch Wilderness Area, the extensive Thurra River dune system, Point Hicks Lightstation and close to the stunning views from Genoa Peak. Campsites are situated at Peachtree Creek near Tamboon, Thurra River, Mueller Inlet, Wingan Inlet and Shipwreck Creek. A lift in a fishing boat is usually required to cross Sydenham, Tamboon, Wingen and Mallacoota Inlets. This walk can be extended beyond Mallacoota through Cape Howe Wilderness Area for another 80km to Eden in NSW.



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Starting point – Brian Freeman lays 41 poppies before stepping off on Australian Traverse.

OPPOSITE: Janny Poate and Brian Freeman walking through the streets of Mareeba, QLD collecting money for Walking Wounded.



WORDS_MONICA MCINNES

PHOTOS_MM AND WALKING WOUNDED

Hard yards, big heart

Great Walks caught up with Brian Freeman from the Walking Wounded charity in the middle of his north-south traverse of Australia to raise funds to support Australia's modern-day veterans.

With a loud honk, a friendly wave and a wide berth, the b-double semi trailer rattled past. I held my hat, stepped down the embankment and managed a small wave.

Brian, on the other hand, was as cool as a cucumber, continuing along the shoulder of the Canarvon Highway waving to the friendly driver. His walking line didn't waiver. I guess that's what happens after 41 days on the road and more than 2300km of dirt and bitumen roads behind him. And he is almost half way on his journey to reach Australia's most southerly point in Tasmania.

I had joined Brian Freeman, founder and executive director of Walking Wounded, a charity group helping support the psychological recovery and rehabilitation of Australia's modern-day veterans, about 40km north of Roma in Queensland. Brian, an ex-soldier, was on a mission to complete the first traverse of Australia from north to south, including a 300km kayak of Bass Strait. It wasn't a solo expedition. Safely tucked into his backpack was a silver cylinder containing the honour roll of the 41 Australian soldiers who paid the supreme sacrifice in Afghanistan. Accompanying him along the way were family members and mates of the fallen.

I clambered back up the embankment to re-join Brian. "Most people give us a really wide berth and we like to give them a big wave," Brian tells me.

Best foot forward

Trucks are the least of Brian's woes. The cattle up north were a challenge. "One morning, just on dawn, this bull had a go at me, so I ran up this six metre scrubby embankment," Brian recounts.

Even more challenging were dirt roads in the Cape as the corrugations caused Brian much bodily duress. "You just can't get an even gait. You are always stepping out and stepping in and that's really debilitating," Brian explains.

Courtesy of the corrugations, Brian developed a bad case of tendinitis in his right shin. Brian consulted his Cairns-based friend and orthopaedic surgeon who prescribed anti-inflammatory and pain relief and explained how to strap his ankle and leg to manage his injury. For the next 14 days, Brian



nursed his injury and reduced his progress to 50km per day. "I managed to get to the bitumen. But if I had rung any other doctor they would have said I was done. My mate has a real sense of adventure and knew what this walk means to me," Brian explains.

Despite ailments and charging bulls, Brian remains philosophical about his adventure. "It's hard to complain when I have 41 names of fallen men on my back."

Perhaps the toughest challenge is for family and friends the 41 fallen soldiers have left behind. Naturally, family members will forever grieve the loss of their loved one. It's certainly the case for Janny Poate who lost her son Robbie in Afghanistan under the most devastating of circumstances – an insider attack, where a rogue Afghan National Army soldier opened fire on the secured base, killing three men: Lance Corporal Stjepan Milosevic, Sapper James Martin and Private Robert Poate.

While Janny misses Robbie every day, she credits participating in activities like this as an opportunity for veterans to kick-start their recovery. "When you're out here and get talking to the veterans they often open up and tell their stories about war that they would probably never tell their own families or mates. I'm probably a bit like a mum to them, someone they can open up to and I think it helps them immensely," Janny explains.

The healing process

It's a similar story for many of the parents of our slain soldiers. Brian believes the adventure and endurance activities funded by Walking Wounded seem to be "healing for the parents who get to hear a lot of stories about their sons from their fellow soldiers."



LEFT: Brian Freeman and Ray Palmer, father of Scott Palmer, on the dirt in far north Queensland.

BELOW: The Afghanistan Honour Roll cylinder. Inside are the names of the 41 Australian who paid the supreme sacrifice.



“Adventure and exercise are not bad catalysts for giving these young men and women some confidence and kick starting their recovery.”

Some they’ve never heard before.” He continues, “I think they want to give back to the wounded boys.”

Janny agrees, pointing to the honour roll on Brian’s back, “it’s not just Robbie’s name in there – it’s all 41 of them. But they also represent all those other heroes, their mates they have left behind. I’m just so proud of these young men and women who have put their lives on the line for this country.”

Many returned soldiers suffer from the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and it’s these veterans who find participation in events like traversing Australia a therapeutic experience. Brian recounts the story of one recently discharged veteran who joined the team in Cape York as a support crew volunteer. Suffering from PTSD, overweight and on a concoction of anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medication, making him drowsy, unmotivated and clouding his thinking, he slowly joined Brian on his daily treks clocking up five to 10km of running and walking a day. “We were building him up slowly and he soon did his first full marathon distance. In 38 days he’s lost 17 kilos and is now off his medication. His clarity of thought is back, he looks a million bucks, and he’s focused again. People are hi-fiving him again,” Brian reveals.

Community spirit

Brian is a strong believer in this recovery recipe for PTSD suffers. “Adventure and exercise are not bad catalysts for giving these young men and women some confidence and kick starting their recovery. It’s a really simple formula and I’ve seen it help soldiers and veterans suffering from PTSD,” he says.

Another truck rattles by, breaking the silence with a shot of bluster. Since my time on the track more family members and friends of the fallen soldiers joined Brian on his incredible

journey traversing Australia. And on 22 August, the fourth anniversary of the death of Private Matthew Lambert, Brian and the team arrived in Tasmania’s South Cape Bay. It took 85 days to cover 5340km. He wore through seven pairs of shoes, drank approximately 700L of water and burnt around 700,000 calories. In a moving ceremony, 41 poppies were placed in the ocean to remember those men on the Afghanistan honour roll. It was emotional for Brian. Not only had he conquered the first traverse of Australia under human power and raised more than \$500,000 to prevent suicide in wounded soldiers along the way, he had also provided a unique opportunity for veterans and family members of the fallen to come together and share memories, laughter and some good old fashioned sweat along the road.

The journey continues

The honour roll journey hasn’t finished. Brian Freeman, his support crew and the family and friends of the 41 fallen Australians will continue their journey around the globe. The next phase is to walk Kokoda in September, followed by a climb of Mt Kilimanjaro in October before returning the honour roll home to the Australian War Memorial on Remembrance Day this year. Prior to the Australian Traverse leg of the tribute walk, the honour roll team attempted to climb Mt Everest only to be forced to abandon the mission when the devastating earthquake struck Nepal.



NEED TO KNOW

You can track the tribute walk around the world by visiting www.trackthetribute.org.au

To donate to Walking Wounded visit www.walkingwounded.org.au





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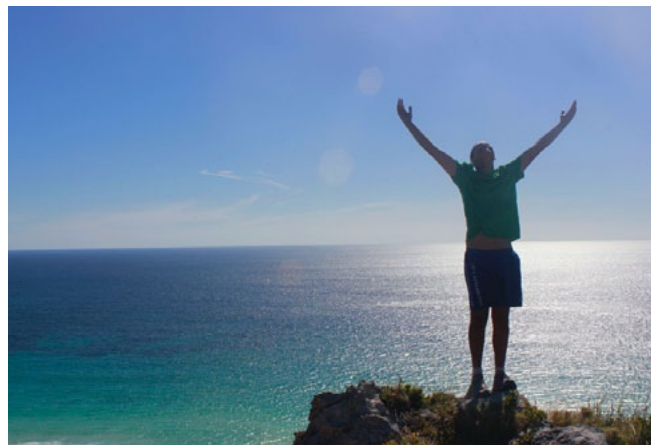
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www.forwardtravel.com.au

Wilsons Abel Tasman

Abel Tasman NP, at the top of the South Island, is NZ's finest coastal park, basking under some of the most sunshine hours in the country, year round. Join one of Wilsons Abel Tasman's three or five-day breaks, with kayaking, walking and cruising options for a civilised adventure that includes all the comforts of modern living: hot showers, cooked meals and no heavy packs to carry. Birdlife and sea life abound but a lack of animals or plants to scratch, bite or sting means it is possible to walk barefoot through many areas.

www.abeltasman.co.nz

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Lord Howe Island.
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www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au

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www.lifesanadventure.com.au

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www.flindersisland.com.au

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www.alpinerecreation.com

Aspiring Guides

The South Island is one those places where you can don some crampons and get 'up close and personal' with a glacier. Aspiring Guides offers a challenging three-day Aspiring Glacier Expedition in the Mt Aspiring NP and an epic five-day Glacier Hiking traverse of NZ highest glaciated regions. While you need to have an adventurous spirit and be fit to handle physically demanding trekking, you don't need mountaineering experience. Our internationally qualified mountain guides will kit you out, show you how to use the gear and take care of your safety on and off the ice.

www.aspiringguides.com

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Tonga Quarry, Abel
Tasman NP, NZ.
Wilsons Abel Tasman.

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www.pinetrees.com.au

Yuraygir Walking Experiences

Enjoy the unique flora and fauna of the Yuraygir Coastal Walk with our highly qualified local guides. The Yuraygir Coastal Walk was established in 2010 and covers 65km along the most undeveloped section of the NSW coastline. The trail consists of a range of easy to moderate walking conditions that suit any person of average fitness. We accommodate our walkers in a range of excellent local holiday houses and/or in three-star lodges and cabins with ensuites. This is a walk you won't forget.

www.clarencevalleyexperience.com.au

Inspiration Outdoors

West Australian outfit Inspiration Outdoors offer their 10 day "Great Southern Explorer tour", which combines all of the best days walks between Albany to Esperance along WA's southern coast including the 17km Cape Le Grande trail. This walk includes some of the best coastal scenery in the country. About 40 minutes east of Esperance in WA's deep south, Cape Le Grand is famed for its pure white sand, dramatic granite domes and crystal clear blue water. The Cape Le Grand Coastal Trail takes it all in.

www.inspirationoutdoors.com.au

The Bruny Island Long Weekend

This luxury three-day tour takes you from Tasmania's capital via private boat to Bruny Island. Guests are treated to coastal walks, produce direct from the source, luxury camping and exquisite meals. After traversing headlands where the next stop is Antarctica, retreat back to camp with luxury in mind. Crisp sheets on king-sized beds and an outdoor shower framed by towering Eucalypts await. Hop aboard Rob Pennicott's adventure cruise on the final day, journeying past the southern hemisphere's highest sea-cliffs, keeping watch for whales, dolphins and fur seals.

www.brunyislandlongweekend.com.au

Walking Legends – Tongariro Hiking Tour

We will reveal to you the geological and cultural secrets of Tongariro NP on our three-day guided hiking adventures to dramatic volcanic peaks, steaming crater lakes, lush rainforests and waterfalls. Our small groups and helpful guides will create a fun, relaxed atmosphere, with days ranging from the challenging 19km Tongariro Alpine Crossing to less strenuous forest and waterfall walks. We stay in the "Chateau Tongariro", one of NZ's iconic historic accommodations set amidst the park's volcanoes. For adventurous souls we also have fully-catered hut-to-hut journeys available.

www.walkinglegends.com

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www.parktrek.com.au



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Paths, peaks and pubs

Britain's long-distance walking trails offer some of the best views in the country and you can do them knowing there's a hot meal and a cold ale at the end of each day.

WORDS_JIM BAKER. PHOTOS_JB AND THINKSTOCK

On the Lake District part of
the Coast to Coast Walk.



Three of the Nine Standards Rigg.



pastures, into the adjoining villages of Ingleby Cross and Ingleby Arncliffe, a beautiful wooded area in the shadow of the Cleveland Hills.

The Coast to Coast walk now becomes one with the Cleveland Way for a few kilometres, following long sections of paved track, high in the moorlands. The effort involved in the construction of this track is hard to imagine.

A notable landmark in this section is the Wainstones, a jagged set of block like rocks totally out of character with the surrounding countryside. The final section of the walk takes in the village of Glaisdale and passes by the Falling Fosse, a 20m high waterfall. It then crosses some boggy stretches until it reaches the coast, with a cliff top walk around the headland into the town of Robin Hood's Bay.

Britain's network of long-distance trails offer bushwalkers a chance to experience a side of the country most people don't see. And you can do all these walks staying at a cosy inn every night and even having most of your luggage transported for you each day. Result!

Coast to Coast Walk (320km/10-14 days)

The concept of a walk across the top of England was the brainchild of the late Alfred Wainwright, England's best known writer of walking guides. It stretches from St Bees, a village on the Cumbria coast, to Robin Hood's Bay on the Yorkshire coast. The first few days of the trek are in the Lake District, arguably the most beautiful part of England. This is the most strenuous part with steep climbs, clambering over slippery rocks and crossing streams on stepping stones, but once you reach the top of the hills it is all worthwhile – fabulous views across the lakes and valleys.

The walk leaves the lakes at the ancient town of Shap, with its imposing ruined abbey, and follows moorland and pastureland with glorious buttercup meadows, before crossing the border from Cumbria into Yorkshire and the Pennine Hills, the watershed between the east and west of England. Wainwright offers various routes, but urges walkers to visit the Nine Standards Rigg, a curious set of cairns set high on Hartley Fell. Their origin is obscure, but the varied construction and the intricacy of the stone work are fascinating. Beware, the ground is very muddy.

After passing through the town of Richmond with its 12th Century castle, the trail is mostly across open moorland and

Offa's Dyke Path (285km/9-13 days)

Around 750AD King Offa of Mercia built an earthwork marking the border of his kingdom with Wales. His name lives on in the Offa's Dyke Path, a trail traversing the border country between England and Wales, which follows the original line of the Dyke in many places, where the earthwork is sometimes visible. There are diversions to traverse more scenic routes, resulting in a trail that passes through very varied terrain, remote and wild, pastoral and serene. There are steep gradients for those looking for a physical challenge, beautiful woodland areas and an abundance of wild flowers, birds and animals.

The Path begins high on the northern bank of the Severn River and finishes on the North Welsh coast at Prestatyn. The initial stage is strenuous, following a switchback route high above the River Wye with excellent views to the valley before reaching the historic town of Monmouth.

This is followed by easier riverside walking through sheep pastures until the Path reaches the wilder country of the Black Mountains, steep bracken covered slopes, moorland and peat bogs, with a long ridge walk and steep descent to the town of Hay-on-Wye, famous for its castle and outdoor bookshops. From here the path leads to the old market town of Kington, initially following the Wye and then climbing steadily before a long, easy descent into the town. The airy slopes of the green moorland and the soft grass underfoot make for very pleasurable walking.

For the next few days the Dyke is very much in evidence as the Path meanders through woodland and over hills, with some very steep



The author above
Robin Hood's Bay.

LEFT: Poppy fields on
the South Downs Way.



ascents and descents and magnificent views of the Welsh countryside. On then through the town of Trevor, where the Path traverses Telford's famous aqueduct, to the remote Clwydian Ranges, where the gradients are not steep, the scenery superb and boardwalks carry walkers over boggy areas. The final section is a comfortable walk, following lanes and field paths into the sea-side town of Prestatyn.

South Downs Way (160km/5-9 days)

The South Downs Way follows the rolling hills separating the towns of Winchester and Eastbourne, then joins the south coast high up on the famous white cliffs overlooking the English Channel. It is an enjoyable walk through open country and

woodland with prolific wildflowers and wildlife. While not having the challenges of some other walks in the UK, there are enough steep hills to ask a few questions!

The trail begins at the west door of Winchester cathedral. Winchester traces back to Celtic settlements in 450BC. The first stretch passes through forest and farmland, traversing fields filled with white poppies, followed by a climb over Beacon Hill, the first introduction on the walk to the high ground of the Downs. The next section provides a contrast of tough hill climbing with strolling through beautiful beech forest, before the walk follows the top of the South Downs escarpment. There are spectacular views across the valley to the north and the ancient history of the



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The beauty of Cumbria.

“ Walking takes the Way across the deliciously named Roseberry Topping ”

Head, where the cliff plummets 162m to the beach below, Thence on to the sea-side resort of Eastbourne, where a plaque marks the end of the Way.

Cleveland Way (177km/6-9 days)

The Cleveland Way stretches from the market town of Helmsley, near the centre of the North York Moors NP, northwards to the coast, and then swings southeast to follow the coastline to the town of Filey. Beautiful countryside ranges from pastureland to bleak moorland, with some tough hills to climb, and narrow paths close to the edge of cliffs nearly 100m high. The walking is demanding but worthwhile.

Initially the walk is easy and the views westward across the green plains to the distant Pennine Hills are superb, but soon the track reaches open, windy moorland to join up with the Coast to Coast Path, after a section described in the guide book – accurately – as “a monstrous roller coaster”. The next section of moorland walking takes the Way across the deliciously named Roseberry Topping, a hill clad in history, its name believed

area is demonstrated by the Devil’s Jumps, a series of Bronze Age barrows laid out along the ridge.

On this stretch the track passes the Devil’s Dyke, a dry valley said to have been carved out by Satan in order to allow the sea to flood all the churches in the valley below.

Ditchling village is way down in the valley, but the village itself is very pretty and well worth the detour from the ridge above. Above the village, Ditchling Beacon is a nature reserve and popular tourist spot. The Way now turns toward the coast, following the ridge to the attractive village of Alfriston, on the River Cuckmere, becomes a fascinating mass of twists and bends on its way to sea. From the river mouth the track is a switch-back as it negotiates the Seven Sisters, along the top of the famous white cliffs, until finally reaching Beachy

awakening the spirit of adventure within.

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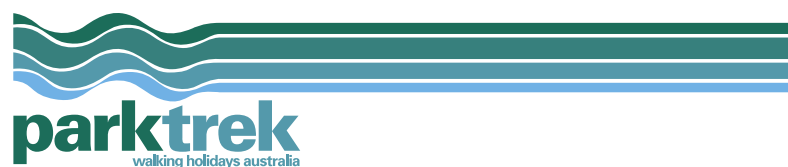
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to be derived from the times of the Vikings, passing on the way Captain Cook's Monument, a 15m high stone obelisk that overlooks Marton, where James Cook was born in 1728.

From there the track heads to the coast, to the quaint town of Staithes, a haven for fishermen, traders and smugglers over the centuries. The majority of the walking is now along cliffs high above the North Sea, with a background noise of hundreds of seabirds and the crashing of the waves far below. The trail passes through Whitby, probably best known for the ruins of its Benedictine abbey, laid waste in 1540 during the dissolution of the monasteries under the auspices of Henry VIII.

The cliffs then drop away slowly on route to the tourist town of Scarborough, but are interspersed by many steep climbs in and out of deep wooded valleys. It is a surreal experience descending into the valleys, as the roar of ocean and the wind slowly subside into complete silence on the valley floor.

The final stretch is an easy stroll along a level track on the cliffs to Filey, where a stone monument marks the end of the Way. 

NEED TO KNOW

Information regarding British national walk trails can be found at www.nationaltrail.co.uk

Also walking tour specialists Let's Go Walking offers self-guided walking holidays throughout the UK and Ireland. You do the walking they organise your bags to be waiting for you at your next night's accommodation. For more info visit www.letsgowalking.com 

Walk notes **4 LONG-DISTANCE PATHS, BRITAIN**



Walknotes

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Coast to Coast Walk
(320km/10-14 days) | 3. South Downs Way
(160km/5-9 days) |
| 2. Offa's Dyke Path
(285km/9-13 days) | 4. Cleveland Way
(177km/6-9 days) |

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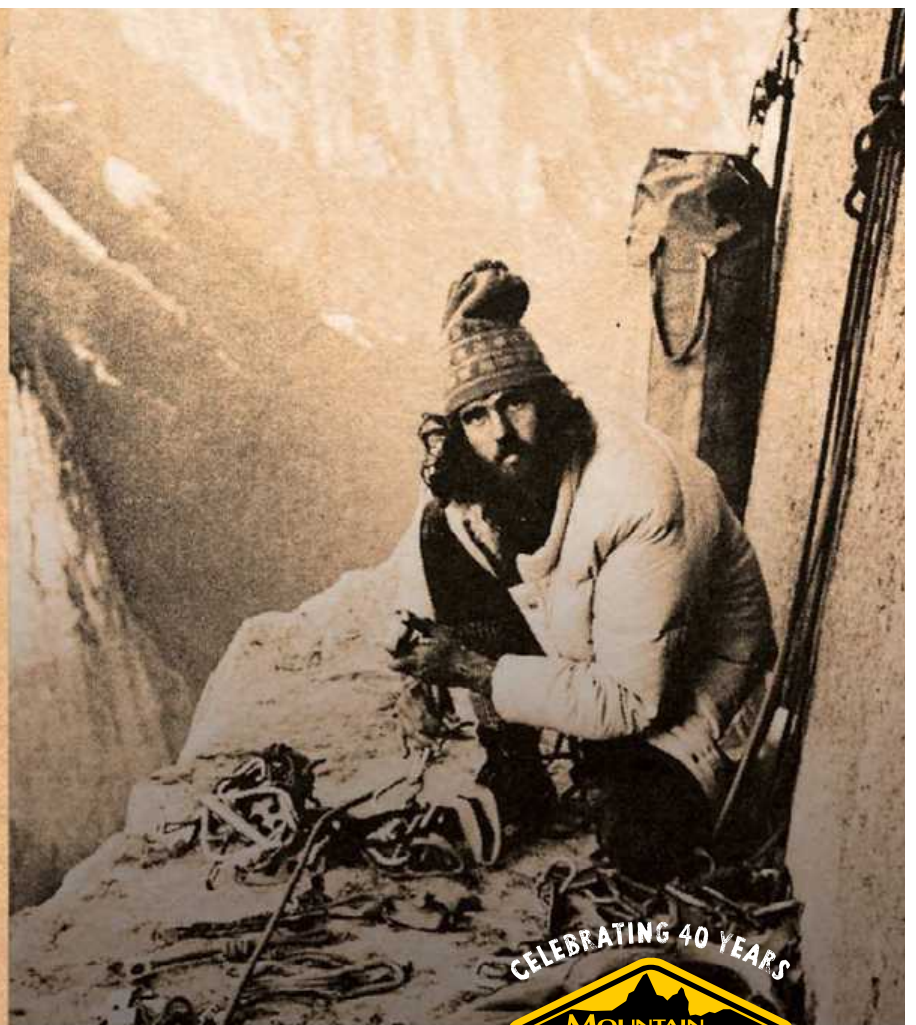
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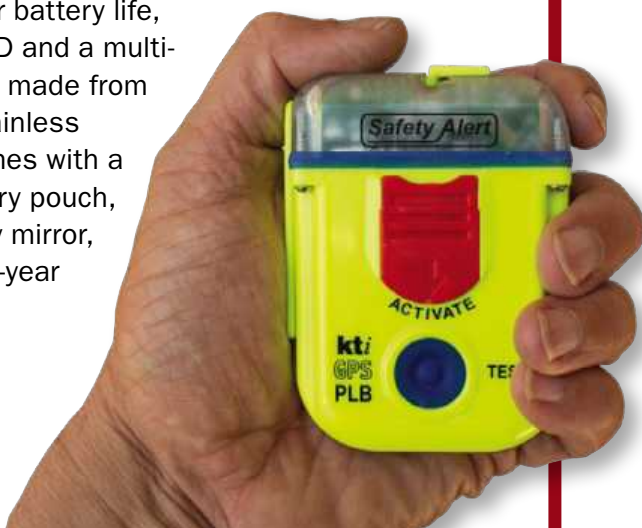
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Lowe Alpine Axiom Cerro Torre 65-85 rucksack

Adding their new Axiom harness system to the Cerro Torre backpack means you can now have the perfect fit throughout your walk. The beauty of this is you can easily adjust the back length while you wear it, with a lockable slider system for changing from up to downhill sections.

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Website: www.intertrek.com.au



Optimus Crux with Terra Weekend HH Cookset

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The Nite Owl "Swivel" provides lightweight, hands-free and three-directional illumination for walking or any activity undertaken in poor light. Incorporating three super bright LED's, Nite Owl clips securely under the brim of any hat or cap, emitting a beam of light directly above the wearer's line of vision.

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Website: www.niteowl.com.au

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You won't be afraid to let your feet take you off track when you have the TPS 520 on (1640g per pair). Reliable, tough and comfortable, it's made out of 2.6-2.8mm full grain leather with Gore-Tex lining. It's waterproof and shock absorbing, with TPS shock and Vibram Triple Power Structure sole.

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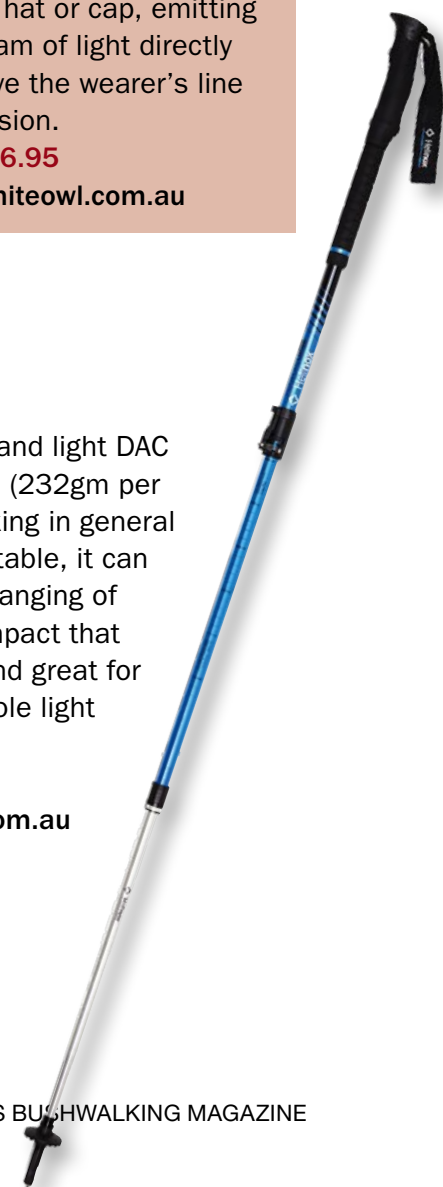


Helinox LB135 trekking pole

Made out of the strong and light DAC TH72M alloy, the LB135 (232gm per pole) is perfect for trekking in general conditions. Easily adjustable, it can be adjusted to heights ranging of 130-200cm. It's so compact that fits in your backpack, and great for walkers who like their pole light and strong.

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When the wind gets the better of your camp master chef creations, the Windmaster is sure to withstand those windy conditions. Equip with stove body, TriFlex (three-prong pot support) and carry bag; it burns for approximately 1.5 hours, and weighs in at a mere 67gm.

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Website: www.velovita.net.au



Exped Venus II tent

Two people, four seasons. The Venus II (2.7kg) is packed with versatility and comfort. Ridge tunnel tent designed, it maximises interior space and protection from what the seasons throws at you. Its flat pole sleeves make setting up a cinch, and keeps the inside dry as you pitch in the rain.

RRP: \$799.95 | Website: www.expeditionequipment.com.au

Lowe Alpine Zephyr 55-65L rucksack

Go light and easy for multiday walks with the Zephyr backpack (1.85kg). It's made from a durable micro rip-stop fabric, making it tough for your terrain, and has a fully adjustable, and very comfortable Axiom Light harness back system. It also features a very handy side entry zip for easy access.

RRP: \$299.95

Website: www.intertrek.com.au



Gondwana men's Vanderlin pant

Lightweight (412gm), moisture-wicking and rated UPF 50+ for summer, the Hydrolite Ripstop Vanderlin pants are also made to be durable. They feature a hidden elastic waist expander, cargo style patch pockets at the thigh and can be converted to shorts by zipping off the legs.

RRP: \$109.99

Website: www.gondwanaoutdoor.com

Mountain Designs Pro-Elite STORMCHASER Gore-Tex Jacket

Lightweight and made using GORE-TEX Active fabric, the Stormchaser is durably waterproof, windproof and extremely breathable – the most breathable fabric in the GORE-TEX product family. The Mountain Designs Pro-Elite range has been consistently field tested for 40 years. Features: Gore-Tex Active 3L 30D textured polyester, Waterproof, Windproof, Breathable, Water repellent pocket zippers

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Hard lessons learnt

Marcus O'Dean gives a time-proven perspective of what you can do to minimise discomfort and maximise safety on bushwalks.

Today the outdoor gear and the materials from which it is made may have significantly changed, but the principles espoused here remain as true as when Paddy Pallin tramped through all those hills and rivers in the 1930s.

Some walkers go to significant expense buying the newest and lightest ... and then they get more of it and stuff their packs full of it so they can cater for all contingencies. They do themselves a disservice if they carry stuff that they don't use on three successive walks (apart from a first aid kit) that they shouldn't be putting it in there in the first place. Parkinson's Law, "that work expands to fit the time available" could be easily applied to backpacks i.e. "gear expands to fit the space available". Here are some tips and techniques that will keep you walking longer and better that you may be able to adopt on your next overnight bushwalk.

1 Use a smaller pack

While you may need a 70-litre-plus pack for skiing or snowshoeing, by judicious gear selection, you may get away with a 45-50-litre pack. I used to love the old Summit Gear Warrigal Aussie-made gems. Known as day-and-a-half packs, they fitted all I needed for a four-day Budawangsojourn (with a loaf of rye bread) and we travelled fast and far. Naturally, if you are on extended walks with no resupply, temper this with common sense.



All kitted up for a Cradle Mountain bushwalk. Tas Tourism.

LEFT: Finding just the right stick on the Routeburn Track, Fiordland. Tourism NZ and Vaughan Brookfield.

2 Multi-use items

The cord you use to support your light fly shelter between trees or sticks can double to lower your pack and gear down precipitous cliff lines. Why carry an extra rope? Carry that principle to a recycled wine cask bladder that you use to carry water to camp and can also be an effective neck cushion when you sleep. You get the idea. Look for those opportunities to take items that do double or triple duty.

3 An extra warm layer – two ways

You can save on expensive self-inflating mats, by getting a cheaper thinner budget one, placing it over a thin closed-cell foam mat and laying your folded spare clothes between the two layers for extra warmth and insulation. The large extra garbage bag, which weighs nothing, can be worn between layers when it turns out colder or sleeting and core temperature preservation is essential – just cut two arm holes and head hole. Bonus – a beanie on the head is worth two jackets on your back for warmth.

4 Take pressure off your joints

If you are walking in forested country like the Blue Mountains, grab two straight sticks about 1.5m long, cut shallow notches in one end and tie some wrist loops of cord on them and they'll do admirably for trekking poles (or you could just buy trekking poles – Ed), then use them at night to hold up one or both ends of your fly shelter. When you stop for a short breather, lean your pack against a tree and take the weight off your hips and shoulders. Also, keep your hip belt at the correct position and tensioned so it does its job.

5 Close and Heavy

Put dense, heavy items closer to your back in the pack. This keeps you better balanced through your centre of gravity being closer. Use weigh-nothing, draw-cord stuff sacks to compartmentalise your gear and keep a mental pack map of where everything is packed and do it the same way every time.

6 Plan walks close to water

Then you don't need to carry so much of it. Sterilise it with a few drops of iodine per bottle or use other purification methods that don't require you to carry extra devices.

WORDS_MARCUS O'DEAN



7 Light footwear pays

Most bushwalks do not justify heavy full leather boots with thick soles, especially if you minimise what's on your back and you relieve pressure with walking poles. US Army studies concluded that a kg on your foot was the equivalent of 5kg on your back. Heavier boots tire your legs quicker and encourage sloppy foot placement.

8 Lightweight foodie implements

Some to consider:

- Nesting aluminium billys and frypan.
- Opinel brand folding knife – beautifully designed, ultra-light and hold a great edge.
- Cut-down wooden spatula for frying/stirring.
- Some foil
- A small spoon or spork

9 Cooking tips

Pack self-raising flour and milk powder to make pikelets or damper in a billy on coals. They are warming and full of much-needed carbs.

Use a cooking fire where you can. Hold your hand 60cm above coals until too hot to determine oven temperature, 1-2 sec – 260°, 3-4 sec – 200°, 5-6 sec-150°, 7-10 sec – 100°.


Use a small cooking fire when can and select walks where this is accepted. Watch for fire danger though.

10 Take a cooler sleeping bag than you need

Then wear a beanie, your thermals and fill your water bottle with hot water and put it inside a sock. Voila, you now sleep 10° warmer.

11 Can-do mindset

Ok, I know I said “10 tips” but this encapsulates the Basic Bushwalking attitude to exploring the outdoors. Walkers who gain the most from their endeavours put more thought into the activity itself, rather than the gear they pack. They have developed self-reliance to the point where gear is a secondary consideration, not the reason for the walk justifying expense on gear that ultimately just makes other people richer. If you can do that then you will have achieved greater satisfaction and be a more integral part of your environment, rather than someone who just ticks a location off on a list.

So it's time to get out there and experience the best the world can offer and you'll do it for longer and be happier in the process. 

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Track Tested treats

Great Walks puts three products perfect for multi-dayers to the test.

Klean Kanteen

Klean Kanteen introduced the world's first BPA-free metal hydration bottle in 2004 and their following exploded due to national bans of BPA-laden, polycarbonate containers in the USA. Today Klean Kanteen continues to lead through innovation and example, bringing new products to market that replace plastic with safe, long-life cycle alternatives. Their new products eliminate paint and plastic altogether, thereby leading the world in safe drinking containers.

Now Zen Imports, who are always at the forefront of importing innovative and functional products for outdoors people, are distributing a wide variety of Klean Kanteen products including the Classic style stainless steel bottle in more colours and sizes from 800ml, through 1182ml, both with a Sports Cap and the 1900ml with standard Loop Cap. With wide mouths they are easy to fill and their rounded internal corners are easy to clean and don't harbour impurities and bacteria. Being stainless they do not impart or retain unwanted flavours.

Klean Kanteen also have a Wide Insulated series of containers, from 355ml to 591ml volume, that will keep liquids hot for at least six hours and cold for 18 hours. Evan, from Zen, informed me that their



efficiency was due to the air gap between the stainless steel walls being purged to a vacuum state during manufacture after sealing, whereby a magnesium base interior capsule was ignited, consuming the air in the gap. How clever is that.

Klean Kanteen even make "Growlers" for boutique beer connoisseurs – apparently it's all the rage in the US and catching on here. Klean Kanteen bottles encourage users not to use disposable plastic bottles that create problems with landfill and large-scale ocean pollution, so you'll be doing your bit if you use and keep using a Klean Kanteen for your hydration needs.

RRP: 20oz Classic Insulated – \$46

Website: www.zenimports.com.au

Review_Marcus O'Dean



Atka Spork

The Atka Spork is an evolution in the concept of hybridised cutlery. When you are trying to shave grams off your bulging backpack on a week-long walk, the Atka Spork does the job nicely.

In common with other brands of spork, the Atka has a combined shallow-dished spoon and fork tines to cover 90% of the casserole-ly, pasta-ish type dishes you'd prepare out bush. Where it differs from the others is in its serrated knife surface on two of the edges, meaning you can confidently cut up your steak with it as well.

Oh – another point of difference with the Atka is that the spoon tool is at the opposite end to the fork tool. It comes in a range of colours, made of tough, hygienic and durable polycarbonate and I can't get them off my kids at home, who have taken to them like a shot.

Only thing that worries me about them now is, what do you call it when it's got a knife on it as well and a spoon and fork? A Sporkni? Sounds like some Russian seaside resort or crew-served weapon.

I think I'll go and register that name soon and make a squillion out of it.

RRP: \$18.50 – four-colour pack

Website: www.zenimports.com.au

Review_Marcus O'Dean



Therm-A-Rest Neoair Xlite mat

Remember the multi day hikes when at the end of the day all you had to look forward to was a blue yoga mat? My back still hasn't forgiven me. Today there are multiple options, but when you get down to it, for me it's all about comfort and weight.

Ticking all the boxes is the Therm-A-Rest Neoair Xlite. It targets the "three season" market, but in the Australian climate, unless you're in the alpine region, with an R-value rating of 3.2, it's your four season buddy. It first grabbed my attention on the shelf in its stuff jacket where it was dwarfed by a water bottle and weighed a measly 350gm. Tick. No pump required and I was able to inflate it without busting a lung. Tick. Once inflated and with my bag on it, I could easily adjust the valve and control the level of firmness. Tick.

Warmth. Yeah baby! The reflected body heat keeps you nice and comfortable when the temp in the tent drop. The tech speak is "The Triangular Core Matrix construction maximises insulating properties to keep the cold ground from robbing all your warmth". HUGE TICK.

Ok, so in the true spirit of balance, if you want to nit pick. Some may complain about the "lying on a bag of crisps" noise. For me, no issue, even less once your sleeping bag's on top. With the streamline, tapered, lightweight design, the compromise is width. If you toss and turn regularly, I suggest you either slip the mattress INSIDE your bag. TICK, or look elsewhere.

Finally, the price. It's not the cheapest on the market, but what price do you put on an awesome night's sleep? I feel now like I'm glamping. So much so I bought a Therm-A-Rest pillow!

RRP: \$274-\$334 (depending on size)

Website: www.spelean.com.au

Review_Matthew Gunn

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Slice of heaven

Dan Murphy of Hiking New Zealand reckons he's got the best job in the world. And it'd be hard to argue.

My first tramping memory is organising a two-day hike with my friends which crossed the Ruahine Range near where we lived in the North Island. My older brother had to come along as we were only about 12 at the time. I had an old frameless pack I bought from an army surplus store and a pair of really uncomfortable boots, but I loved every minute of it.

While on my big 'OE' (overseas experience) I stumbled upon my dream job – a hiking guide in the south of Spain. I spent two years guiding in Spain before returning to NZ. Being a guide in my home country seemed like the obvious progression. I found work with Hiking New Zealand and several years later, along with my wife Anne we bought into the business.

We take our clients all over New Zealand – but we focus on the linking up of the national parks which offer the best walking opportunities.

A highlight of a Hiking New Zealand walk is getting that quintessential 'kiwi

tramping experience', staying in the backcountry whether in huts or camping, spending quality time with like-minded people while doing something they love. Even the multiple river crossings (with boots on), that are necessary on some routes in NZ, becomes a highlight. In a nutshell it's probably just that great feeling of contentedness at the day's end, when you find yourself in some truly special place, pleasantly knackered from the hiking, eating great food and enjoying great company. The areas we take clients to are very dynamic and constantly being influenced by natural processes and as a human being you feel pretty insignificant. The people you meet along the way also add to the experience, whether it's meeting someone who is on some huge epic hike or on their first tramp.

There are a number of reasons why you should consider walking with a



DAN MURPHY

guide over DIY, safety and logistics spring to mind, but no less important is the knowledge and local stories that a good guide will share. Being part of a group of like-minded people is fun and inspiring. There will be conversations over campfires that you will remember for the rest of your life!

A trip I really want to do one day is not so much a walk but spending more time in the southwest of the South Island, or what's known as Te Wahipounamu – the South Westland World Heritage Area. There is over 2.6 million hectares to explore, from ice carved fiords and mountains, ancient podocarp forests and a wild coastline. Walking the South Coast from Jacksons Bay to Martins Bay, along the Hollyford track to the Hollyford Valley Road, then hiking up the Deadmans Track and on to the Routeburn Track at Harris Saddle and out to Glenorchy is definitely on my to-do list.

Bushwalking equipment I'd never leave home without? Well after years of carrying a heavy and durable backpack I have been converted to the world of lightweight backpacking. My new 56l carbon fibre, titanium frame pack that weighs 600gm as opposed to my old one that weighed 3.2kg is pretty cool. What else... a pocket knife, head torch (and spare batteries) candle, cigarette lighter and something good to read.



i NEED TO KNOW

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Exploring the Huka Valley.

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Great Walks spent a week hiking in Arnhem
Land and came back the wiser.



Halfway up a precipitous scramble in the Northern Territory's Kakadu National Park, a foot slips somewhere above me. "All good Mick?!" I call up the cliff face. A pebble bounces past and into the dark pool at the base of Motorcar Falls, 30m below.

The reply comes quickly, "YEP! No worries. Come on!" Mick has found a way. Mick Jerram is the nuggety former Royal Australian Air Force PT instructor leading us on a walk that will take us across some of the most spectacular and rarely seen parts of the Arnhem Land Plateau.

We eventually strain and scramble our way to the top of Motorcar Falls to be rewarded with views across the entire region known to Jawoyn traditional owners as Yurmikmik – named after the call of the local white-throated grasswren.

From Motorcar Falls we trek along Yurmikmik ridge, stopping just once to evade an aborted charge by four water buffalo. We retreat to the safety of a nearby rock pile and the buffalo vanish into the scrub as quickly as they had appeared. Further on, a hiker's boot disturbs a rock. From underneath, a harmless children's python makes off to avoid the disturbance. Bird song surrounds us and the trees are alive with movement. We count the number of different birds we can identify as we go along and the list tops 50 species before we arrive at our first camp on Kurrundie Creek.

Heading upstream

We can swim in the pools surrounding the falls here; we are above the level at which saltwater crocodiles may occur following

“The terraces erode to minarets and the fissured rock becomes a labyrinth”

the wet season. Walking upstream takes us onto the terraced sandstone plateau. We pass bemused denizens of the sandstone like the prehistoric-looking chestnut-quilled rock pigeon. Small groups of these plump, pin-headed birds scatter from the terraces as we approach.

We pause to scrutinise rock art galleries. Mick proves here to also be adept at interpreting the ancient daubs of Jawoyn ancestors. He identifies animals and ancestral beings for us, while leaving silence enough for our imaginations to travel. It's impossible not to make comparisons between our journey and the journeys of those people who have walked this country in eons past. The temptation to label such places as wilderness denies the clear reality that, as wild as it is, this is a cultural landscape; a human place.

Continuing deeper into the sandstone country, the terraces erode to minarets and the fissured rock becomes a labyrinth capable of absorbing and disorienting the unwary navigator. We cross the watershed and camp by the flowing waters of Dinner Creek.

The landscape transforms here. Water cascades down sandstone falls every hundred metres or so. The sound of moving



Amphitheatre, Dinner Creek.

BELOW: Australia's most famous bird.



water is the constant soundtrack to life. This is remote country and it feels it. By starlight we search the riverbanks for wildlife. Euros (bulky hill kangaroos) bound along the rocks. In a crevice, again adorned with ancient artwork, we encounter another endemic inhabitant of this region: a northern giant cave gecko.

Timeless landscape

Setting off in the morning it seems logical to assume it'll be an easy walk from here on; a simple matter of following the watercourse down to its confluence with the South Alligator River. But walking in this landscape is rarely so straightforward. We skirt around ever-larger falls until we're stopped by the main falls on Dinner Creek: a 20m cascade with sheer rock on either



Campfire stars, Katherine River.

ABOVE: Happy Walker, Katherine River, Nitmiluk NP.

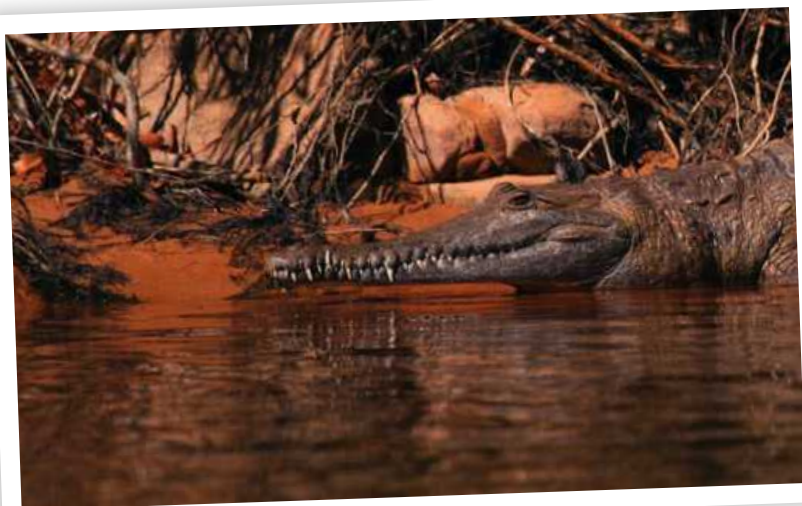




side. We're momentarily stupefied by the prospect of a lengthy walk to get around this barrier when Mick yet again finds a way. He spies a navigable scramble down a re-entrant to one side of the falls and after a wary descent, we're on the floor of a gorge straight out of Jurassic Park.

We pick our way along the river bed and it feels as though few other people have had the privileged of visiting this magical hidden gem of a place. Ferns cover the water's edge. Huge black-banded fruit doves zip across the gorge overhead searching for ripe figs.

In due course we have to start taking care to avoid the dark waters that are now almost certainly home to salties. Having seen only four other hikers during our six-day walk, it feels like we have emerged from a very special part of one of the Northern Territory's truly special wild places.



“Walking in such parts of the NT's Top End is a privilege.”

Just one of the extensive network of Top End routes that await discovery by keen hikers, Yurmikmik is only possible with permits and a talented, experienced and accredited guide. It connects the numerous trails within Kakadu NP with some of the lesser-known routes through Nitmiluk NP on its southern border. The walks here (the Jatbula Trail - see break out - and many routes making their way up to the headwaters of the Katherine River) are rapidly earning a reputation for being among the best marked and “off-trail” walks in the country.

The permits required to complete these walks, far from being a troublesome barrier, should be seen for what they are: a welcome measure to protect an area of world-famous cultural and ecological significance and sensitivity. In every sense of the word, walking in such parts of the NT's Top End is a privilege and an experience never to be forgotten.



JATBULA TRAIL

The Jatbula Trail features magnificent waterfalls tumbling from the high sandstone escarpment, these feed into creeks surrounded by shady monsoon forests and the rock outcrops of the escarpment providing great opportunities to view ancient rock art, and cool off with great swimming spots. It's a medium to hard walk and you'll need to be able to carry a full pack over rough ground. The majority of people walk the trail independently however more people are uses guides. There are emergency call devices (ECD) and checkpoint book registers along the way. More info www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au



LEFT: Exploring Dinner Creek, Kakadu NP.

BELOW LEFT: A 'friendly' local,
Katherine River, Nitmiluk.**i NEED TO KNOW****Kakadu National Park**

Located 240km east of Darwin in Australia's tropical north, Kakadu NP is Australia's largest terrestrial national park. Kakadu covers almost 20,000 sq km and is a place of enormous ecological and biological diversity. It extends from the coast and estuaries in the north through floodplains, billabongs and lowlands to rocky ridges and stone country in the south. These landscapes are home to a range of rare and endemic plants and animals, including more than one-third of Australia's bird species and one-quarter of its freshwater and estuarine fish species.

Nitmiluk National Park

This 292,800 ha national park is owned by the Jawoyn Aboriginal people and jointly managed with NT's Parks and Wildlife Commission. Some of the park's features include spectacular dissected sandstone country, broad valleys and numerous, significant cultural sites. The deep gorge carved through ancient sandstone by the Katherine River is the central attraction of the Park. The Park's main entrance is 30km northeast of Katherine via a sealed road. Katherine is located 310km south of Darwin along the Stuart Highway. Leliyn (Edith Falls) on the western side of the Park is reached by turning off the Stuart Highway 42km north of Katherine then following a sealed road for a further 19km.

Need to know

The walk was conducted by Mick Jerram from Gecko's Canoeing and Trekking, www.geckocanoeingandtrekking.com.au.
Ph: 1800 634 319, gecko@nttours.com



2016 will bring the 30th anniversary of the first trip I ran using the name Willis's Walkabouts. That's one of several reasons that I'm going to make 2016 extra special.

For 30 years, I have been blessed with being able to earn a living doing something I love. I have visited many wonderful places and met many wonderful people. I have lived a life that most people can only dream about. But the best parts of that life have come at a price.

In recent years, the price for continuing to run Willis's Walkabouts has been doing more and more of the office. I've had enough. It's time for a change. It's time to concentrate on the things I truly enjoy rather than paperwork. If that means phasing things down a level, so be it. The business is NOT closing, but I am phasing out all print advertising.

*Russell Willis*www.bushwalkingholidays.com.auE rwillis@internode.on.net

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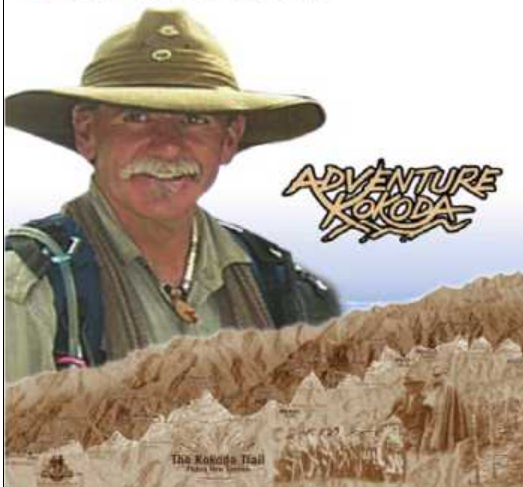
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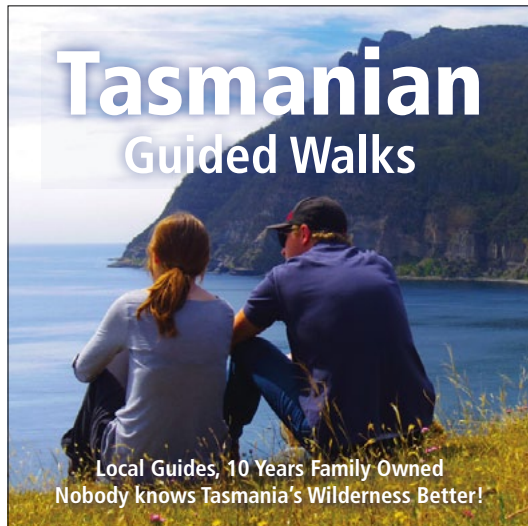
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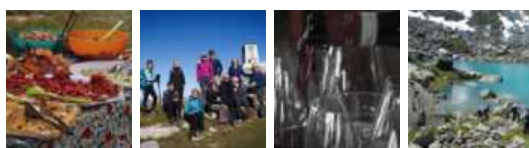
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WORDS OF WISDOM

CHRIS TOWERS

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GREAT RESPONSIBLE WALKS

We believe a great walk is a safe one – and one where you leave the environment as you found it. Here's a simple cut-out-and-keep guide to acting responsibly while on the trail. Laminate it and keep it handy for peace of mind.

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF LEAVE NO TRACE

- 1: Plan ahead and prepare.
- 2: Walk and camp on durable surfaces like established tracks and campsites.
- 3: Dispose of waste properly – pack it in, pack it out.
- 4: Leave what you find.
- 5: Minimise campfire impacts. Use a lightweight stove. Where fires are permitted keep them small and use only fallen fuel and sticks. Put out the fire completely.
- 6: Respect wildlife. Observe wildlife from a distance and don't feed them. Store rations and rubbish securely.
- 7: Be considerate of your hosts and other visitors.

SAFETY DO

- Give complete route details to close relatives/friends or the police.
- Tell them when you are leaving and returning and any special medical conditions.
- Notify them of your safe return.
- Take the correct map and compass. Know how to use them.
- Take appropriate clothing/footwear for extreme weather conditions.
- Take waterproof matches and spare cold food.
- Carry a first aid kit.
- Carrying an emergency beacon.
- Phone home from the first phone box or police station you come to if overdue.

DON'T

- Don't overestimate your abilities. Allow time for the unexpected.
- Don't go faster than your slowest walker. At regular intervals do a group head count.
- Don't split up your group (except for below) during your trip. There's safety in numbers.
- Don't leave an injured person alone in the bush. A walking group of three or more will allow one to look after the injured while the other goes for help.
- Don't keep moving when lost. Find an open campsite with nearby water. Remember Your safety is dependent on your fitness, experience, trip leadership and equipment.

THE ENVIRONMENT

- Always walk on the track – even when wet and muddy.
- Camp at least 100m from lakes and streams.
- Deposit human waste in cat holes dug 20cm deep.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- Preserve the past; examine but don't touch cultural/historical structures or artifacts. Leave rocks, plants and other objects as you find them.

This guide was prepared with the help of Leave No Trace and Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad. See lnt.org.au and bwrs.org.au for more details.



Great escapes



Chris suggests every bushwalker should try a multi-day walk at least once.

I have been a bushwalker for 35 years and although I haven't been able to do overnight or extended walks since a car

accident in April 2000, these remain my favourite type of walk.

Most people start bushwalking with day walks, and indeed most bushwalkers only ever do day walks, but my first three bushwalks were each three days and number four was eight days on the Overland Track. It's safe to say I struggled a bit on each, coping with hot, cold, wet, windy, foggy weather, trying to master unfamiliar gear and clothing, and puffing up and down mountains carrying an unfamiliar, heavy load.

So why did they become my favourite? Two reasons: the destinations that can only be reached on extended walks and the unique experiences offered that day walks just can't provide. While I didn't enjoy the weather on that first trip to Tasmania, I really enjoyed the dramatic vistas. Sure, such scenery is available on some day walks, but an extended trip immerses you in the landscape in a whole different way, and for much longer.

As important as the destinations are, it's the unique experiences on extended walks that are the most important to me and I suspect to most people who do such walks. Watching the sun rise or set on a distant horizon from a remote mountain summit; swimming in a pristine waterhole in Kakadu or the Kimberley, miles away from the nearest signs of humans, except for the Aboriginal rock art; forming deep, lasting friendships with your fellow walkers through the hours spent together on the track or around a campfire. For some lucky

people, such as my wife and I, it was falling in love on an extended walk in Kakadu. Some people turn to extended walking to recover from or overcome trauma or loss, or it might be the opportunity to experience firsthand the history of Kokoda or the Camino in Europe that attracts them.

Given the attractions and benefits of extended walks, why do most bushwalkers only day walk? One aspect is the prospect of carrying a heavy pack. However, we live in an age where there is so much lightweight clothing, equipment and food available that pack weight can be minimised. Whether you're on the trail for two days or two weeks, you still need to carry a tent, sleeping bag and mat, stove, first aid kit, map, compass and change of clothes, so for an extended walk the main difference, in terms of what you need to carry compared to a weekend walk, is your daily food needs.

Some people think that extended walks are more risky. I've never believed this because, unlike on a day walk, if you get into trouble you should be much better off as you're equipped with food, clothing and shelter.

The best advice I heard about planning for an extended walk was from Michael Mitchell, who walked solo from the tip of Cape York to Wilsons Prom a few years back. When asked how he planned and managed such a long trip – it took him almost a year – he said he split the trek into sections of seven days, packing his food accordingly, and approached each day as 'just another day walk'. Such an approach clearly had practical benefits, but perhaps more importantly was a good way to cope with the psychological challenges of such an epic endeavour, but that's a whole new topic.





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